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T.S. ELIOT IN THE AESTHETIC TRADITION

by

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A THESIS

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the many striking parallels between the poetic theory and practice of T.S. Eliot and that of writers belonging to what is generally regarded as the last expression of nineteenth century romanticism, the "aesthetic movement." The first chapter explores the basic assumptions of that movement, pointing out that, above all else, it was an attempt to establish the independence of art from utilitarian considerations of any kind. The suggestion is also made that this insistence on the autonomy of art was responsible for the preoccupation of the aesthetes with what might be called a subjective kind of poetry, with a poetry offering not an objective description of the external world but a view of reality charged with the subjective feelings and mystical perceptions of the poet. Also examined are some of the techniques developed by the aesthetes to communicate this world of inner experience, techniques such as the use of symbols (ordinary objects given emotional suggestiveness by being evoked rather than named directly), the substitution of a logic of association (characteristic of inner mental processes) for a coherent development of thought, an avoidance of all explanatory rhetoric, and a concentration on achieving an effect of incantation.

The second chapter concentrates on Eliot's criticism, noting how he always retained a fundamental belief in the aesthetic doctrine of the autonomy of poetry, but modified it by insisting

that unless poetry is considered in relation to the various disciplines upon which it draws its sustenance, it deteriorates into a mere abstraction. This belief in the separate-but-relatedness of poetry is shown, in turn, to have shaped his view that poetry must take into consideration both the subjective and the objective aspects of experience, that it must represent a fusing together of thought (or feeling) and sensation, form and content.

That in taking this position Eliot was not rejecting but only modifying aesthetic doctrine is demonstrated in the third chapter, which examines the poetry and shows how it continues to exhibit such familiar aesthetic features as a preoccupation with states of feeling, a tendency to avoid discursive rhetoric, a preference for associative patterns of organization, and an emphasis on incantation. What is modified is shown to be mainly the imagery which, being altogether more concrete and substantial than that of aesthetic poetry, made possible the expression of precise rather than generalized emotional states. Only in the later poetry where the emphasis is less on feeling than on ideas is there found to be a significant departure from the aesthetic tradition, a departure evident in such stylistic changes as a greater concentration on rational as opposed to associative forms of organization, a preference for a more intensive allegorical kind of imagery, and a greater use of abstract language.

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PREFACE

In the preface to a collection of critical essays entitled For Lancelot Andrewes, T.S. Eliot described his position as "classicist in literature, royalist in politics, and anglo-catholic in religion."[1] Although he later came to regret this statement, it has nevertheless continued to epitomize what has become the popular view of him: a man of enormous intellectual discipline, committed to a severe moral and religious orthodoxy, intent on establishing a new "classicism" in literature. In support of the latter contention -- the notion that he was important in restoring "classicism" to English literature -- critics have pointed to such things as his healthy respect for literary tradition (as opposed to innovation for its own sake), his concern for simplicity and clarity of expression (a reaction against the diffuseness of much romantic poetry), his insistence on the importance of balance and structure in art, and his willingness to accord wit a legitimate place in poetry (something which it had not enjoyed since the Augustan age). The most important indication of his classicism, however, is usually taken to be his highly formalistic approach to criticism, his concentration on the technical aspects of the work itself rather than (as was often the case with earlier critics) on some peripheral matter such as the life of the author or the historical context in which he wrote.[2]

While it would be foolish, in light of this evidence, to deny that Eliot's plea for an increased objectivity in both poetry and criticism signals a significant shift in English literature from what had been an essentially romantic to a more classical orientation, it would at the same time be a mistake to ignore one of the fundamental tenets of Eliot's own criticism: his insistence that tradition is not something static but a living organism and that, therefore, however much a movement may appear to have emerged full-blown, it is always possible to trace its roots in the period that went immediately before.[3] It is with this idea in mind that I intend to examine Eliot's theory and practice demonstrating that, far from constituting a complete rejection of the nineteenth century, it in fact represents a continuation of many tendencies that were already apparent in the works of writers belonging to what is usually regarded as the last expression of nineteenth century romanticism, the "art for art's sake" or the "aesthetic movement."

In the past, discussions of Eliot's relationship to the aesthetic tradition have been confined mainly to the observation of a few similarities in technique and attitude between his poetry and that of the French symbolists; studies exploring this relationship on the deeper level of poetic theory and taking into account the works of both the French and English aesthetes have been almost totally absent from the critical literature. Typical of this trend but still a useful early study is Edmund Wilson's chapter on Eliot in Axel's Castle. While Wilson concentrates mainly on the poetry,

pointing out how the conversational tone, and ironic mood of Eliot's early poems derive from Laforgue, he does note -- and with some irritation -- the essentially aesthetic orientation of the criticism as well, calling it "an impossible attempt to make aesthetic values independent of all the other values."[4] Another early study which examines (though not as its main focus) Eliot's relationship to the symbolist movement is F.O. Matthiessen's The Achievement of T.S. Eliot.[5] Confining his discussion to the poetry only, Matthiessen points out how from the later symbolists Eliot derived not only such expressive techniques as the suppression of connecting links to suggest the movement of thought in the mind, the manipulation of sound and rhythm to produce an effect of incantation, and the use of concrete images to convey precise emotional states, but also his interest in urban themes and images. The details of this relationship are filled in by such later critics as Elizabeth Drew, D.E.S. Maxwell, Hugh Kenner, and Elisabeth Schneider, none of whom, however, goes beyond the poetry to consider the underlying similarities in poetic theory between Eliot and the aesthetes.[6]

Two studies which do examine Eliot's relationship to the aesthetic movement in terms both of theory and practice are C.K. Stead's The New Poetic and Stephen Spender's Eliot.[7] Stead, whose study is the more comprehensive, is concerned primarily with showing how Eliot's concept of the role of the poet was shaped by his adherence to the aesthetic notion that a poem need not "mean" but only "be." According to Stead, Eliot's way, at least in theory, of

avoiding the didactic in poetry was to argue that the material of a poem is something which arrives spontaneously during moments of inspiration and which is therefore free of any conscious moral designs that the poet might have. Stead also examines the poetry in light of this theory, arguing that, except for the Four Quartets (to which he imputes a more conscious impulse), Eliot's poetry is primarily the product of unconscious inspiration (an expression of what Eliot would call the "first voice"), is therefore devoid of any didactic intention, and consequently qualifies as poetry of the aesthetic tradition. The problem with Stead's approach is that, though accurate in its perception of an affinity between Eliot's poetry and that of the aesthetes, it looks for evidence of that affinity in the wrong place, in an analysis of what allegedly transpired in the poet's mind prior to writing, rather than in a thorough examination of the poems themselves. In other words, Stead fails to show how merely knowing the way in which a poem was composed -- whether it was the product of inspiration or conscious effort (supposing that such a determination were possible in the first place) -- constitutes sufficient evidence for deciding whether or not it belongs within the aesthetic tradition; after all, though they were scrupulous in avoiding any suggestion of didacticism in their verses, the aesthetes themselves tended to emphasize rather than downplay the importance of conscious analysis and deliberate craftsmanship in the process of composing poetry. Unlike Stead, Spender locates Eliot's affinity with the aesthetic movement in his conception of the nature of poetry rather than in his ideas

regarding the role of the poet, arguing that, like the aesthetes, Eliot believed in the autonomy of poetry, in its independence from such other disciplines as philosophy or religion. Spender also makes some attempt to analyze the poetry, showing how this fundamental belief in the autonomy of poetry was reflected in Eliot's habitual use of private symbols which, rather than pointing to some system of ideas outside the poem, derive their life and meaning entirely from the poetry itself.

Where the present study differs from these earlier ones is, first of all, in attempting to view Eliot's aestheticism in the wider perspective of his relationship not only to the French symbolists but to the whole generation of late nineteenth century writers, both English and French, who, if not constituting anything so definite as a movement, were at least united in their commitment to the notion that the primary concern of poetry is Beauty not Truth; and secondly, in exploring Eliot's relationship to these writers at the level of both theory and practice. Accordingly, the first chapter will be devoted to a summary of the basic ideas and practices that united such writers as Swinburne, Pater, and Wilde in England and some of the symbolist and pre-symbolist poets in France. Against this background, Chapter Two will focus exclusively on Eliot's criticism, noting how, though always retaining a belief in the fundamental aesthetic doctrine of the autonomy of art, he modified this doctrine by placing more emphasis than had the aesthetes on the relatedness of poetry, on the fact that when

isolated from the moral, religious and social life of its time, poetry becomes a mere abstraction. Finally, the third chapter will concentrate on the poetry, observing how, on the one hand, it continues to exhibit such aesthetic features as a preoccupation with internal states of feeling, a tendency to avoid discursive rhetoric, a preference for an associative rather than a strictly logical pattern of organization, and an emphasis on incantation, but differing, on the other, in its imagery which, being altogether more concrete and substantial than that of aesthetic poetry, made possible the expression of a wider range and a greater subtlety of feeling.

I. THE MEANING OF AESTHETICISM

Considered in its broadest terms, the so-called aesthetic movement of the late nineteenth century was an attempt by various writers in France and England to establish the autonomy of art by freeing it from service to any external cause or standard whatsoever. More specifically, it was a conviction that the measure of true art is not its usefulness -- how well it comments on politics, points a moral, or expounds a philosophy -- but its beauty -- how perfectly it manages to embody in a physical medium the unique vision or contention in the mind of its creator. In terms of poetry, this single-minded emphasis on beauty rather than utility led in practice to the production of what might be called a subjective kind of poetry, to a poetry in which the world of objective reality (any preoccupation with which would soon require the poet to encroach upon the domain of some other discipline) was generally abandoned for an imaginary or ideal world beyond sense, beyond fact and beyond life. Furthermore, because such a world could never be described directly, form in this kind of poetry -- the poet's ability, through the careful manipulation of sound, rhythm, and imagery, to create a mood suggestive of his inner world -- tended to take precedence over the actual content or material.

What must be emphasized from the onset, however, is that, far from being a new phenomenon, this kind of preoccupation with art for

its own sake had a long history, amounting, in the words of one critic, to an "eternal tendency, suppressed most of the time, but ready to reassert itself whenever certain checks are removed."[1] It is clearly apparent, for example -- to go back no further -- in the romantic period where it manifests itself in such poems as Coleridge's "Kubla Kahn" and Keats' "Ode to Autumn," poems which seem to have no other end in view than their own aesthetic perfection. Similarly, though much of their poetry is philosophic or moralistic in its emphasis, the three major Victorian poets -- Tennyson, Browning and Arnold -- all engaged at times in the writing of what are essentially aesthetic poems, poems which, like Tennyson's "The Kraken" and "The Hesperides" and Arnold's "The Forsaken Merman," seem to exist primarily for the haunting incantatory effect of their sounds and rhythms.

But if the writing of aesthetic poetry was in itself nothing new, what was novel about the approach of the aesthetes was the fact that, for the first time, this kind of poetry was put forward not merely as an alternative to poetry having some demonstrable social function but as the only legitimate kind of poetry. In other words, while the earlier Victorian poets had always been somewhat suspicious of poetry (or for that matter of any art) indulged in for its own sake -- a theme explored, for example, in such poems as Tennyson's "Lady of Shalott" and "The Palace of Art" -- the aesthetes not only refused to apologize for the kind of poetry they were writing but were also openly contemptuous of poetry purporting to teach, edify or perform a social function of any kind.

While it is clearly beyond the scope of this study to explore in any depth the probable historical causes of this radical shift in attitude, it is essential, before passing on to a more thorough consideration of the aesthetes' concept of poetry, to touch upon the two theories that are most commonly advanced to explain the genesis of the aesthetic movement.

Some literary historians, for example, have taken what might be called a sociological approach to the problem, arguing that the art for art's sake movement was essentially a reaction on the part of writers against what they felt to be the unreasonable demands of the public.[2] Proponents of this theory point, first of all, to the enormous popularity at this time of utilitarian philosophy which taught that the ultimate test of the value of any object was not its beauty but its usefulness. Clearly, if a poet were to please the utilitarians he would write nothing but poems specifically calculated to instruct, inform or edify his readers. This emphasis on utility, for example, is at the heart of one of the most influential documents of Victorian literary criticism, Sir Henry Taylor's "Preface" to his play Philip Van Artevelde. Reacting against what he calls the romantic tendency to "stand aloof from everything that is plain and true; to have little concern with what is rational or wise," Taylor declares that the proper function of poetry is "to thread the mazes of life in all its classes and under all its circumstances, common as well as romantic, and, seeing all things, to infer and to instruct" (emphasis added).[3] A second way in which the poet felt unduly

restricted by the public was in his choice of subject matter, the fact that, instead of considering its artistic merits, the public was often prepared to censor a poem simply on the grounds that it dealt with an immoral (which usually meant a sexual) theme. Nowhere is this kind of extra-literary moral censure more evident than in John Morley's review of Swinburne's Poems and Ballads. Though Morley begins reasonably enough, pointing out the unfairness of "blam[ing] an artist of any kind for working at a certain set of subjects rather than at some other set which the critic may happen to prefer," he goes on to violate this principle time and again by lamenting the fact that in Swinburne's poetry "the lurid clouds of lust or of fiery despair and defiance never lift to let us see the pure and peaceful and bounteous kindly aspects of the great landscape of human life."[4]

Other critics attempt to explain the genesis of the idea of art for art's sake in philosophic terms by arguing that the movement was an inevitable outgrowth of the radically new concept of art that was introduced into Germany around the beginning of the nineteenth century in conjunction with the transcendental philosophy of Kant and his disciples.[5] Briefly stated, what these philosophers proposed was that art is the product of a special faculty of the mind which they called the creative imagination, a faculty which mediates between the otherwise separate faculties of the understanding (the faculty which arranges and forms judgments entirely on the basis of sense data), and the reason (the faculty responsible for the formation of abstract or intuitive

ideas that are arrived at independently of sense data). As a product of this synthesizing faculty, then, it follows that art must inhabit a unique world of its own, a world which is neither the ordinary world as perceived empirically by the understanding nor a world of abstract ideas comprehended intuitively by the reason, but an entirely new one in which, for once, understanding and reason, sense and intellect are perfectly welded together. To expect art, then, to be either a slavish imitation of the actual world (a demand that would call for the operation of the understanding alone) or to be a vehicle for the exposition of some abstract philosophic or moral idea (a demand that would involve only the reason) would be to destroy art altogether for it would be to remove it from the only realm in which it is capable of operating, the realm of the imagination. Because they generally regarded the imaginative activity of the artist to be, in some way, analogous to the eternal act of creation of the Absolute, the German transcendentalists usually insisted that though art has the status of an independent living organism, it nevertheless can be an instrument of truth or morality. The important point, however, is that even though they always retained a belief in the relationship between art and truth, their insistence on the autonomous existence of art almost certainly helped to lay the philosophic groundwork for the much more radical crusade undertaken by the aesthetes at the end of the century to free art from subservience to any other discipline whatsoever.

Another philosophic explanation, not so much of the aesthetes' insistence on the autonomy of art but of their preference for what I have called a subjective kind of poetry, is the gradual dissolution during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries of empirical philosophy which had prevailed in England since the time of Locke.[6] The empiricists had based their entire theory of knowledge on the assumption of a dualism between the perceiver and the thing perceived, between the subject which knows and the independent object which is known. Over the years, idealist philosophers like Berkeley and David Hume attacked this theory, arguing that from a strictly logical point of view such a distinction between subject and object is indefensible; that all we can ever really mean by an object is our idea of that object since we can never correct this idea against anything more "real," anything that is itself not merely another idea. What the idealist accomplished, in short, was to reverse the traditional orientation towards the problem of knowing by insisting that reality inheres not in the real world of phenomenal objects but in the mind of the perceiver. This, of course, is a vastly simplified account of an extremely complex philosophic development; what is important for our purposes is simply the observation that with the breakdown of the old empirical and dualistic concept of human knowledge, the path was prepared for the poets, too, to reject the notion of objects uninfluenced by perceiving subjects (the basic principle of objective poetry) in favor of the idea that truth or reality inheres in consciousness (the basic premise of subjective poetry).

So far, then, it should be clear that the aesthetic movement, whether it originated as a response to social pressure, to a changing philosophic conception of art and human perception, or to a combination of both factors was, in its broadest sense, an attempt to assert the independence of art by turning to a poetry, removed as far as possible from everyday reality, whose subject was an inner world of emotional experience and mystical perception. With this idea of the overall direction of the movement in mind, it is time to look more closely at the views of the aesthetes regarding four aspects of poetic theory: the function of poetry, the nature of poetry, the role of the poet, and the purpose of criticism.

The Function of Poetry

Whatever the aesthetes may have believed, in a positive sense, about the function of poetry, they were adamant about what its function was <u>not</u>: that it was not to inculcate morals, expound philosophy, direct politics, substitute for religion, or for that matter to <u>do</u> anything. On the contrary, they repeatedly insisted that the true value of poetry was to be found in the mere fact of its existence as an object of beauty. One of the earliest writers to give expression to this notion of the autonomy of literature was the French writer, Théophile Gautier. Defending himself against the utilitarian critics and their insistence that literature should always serve some useful purpose, Gautier wrote a spirited

preface to his 1835 novel, Mademoiselle de Maupin, in which he argued that literature should be valued simply for its own sake, not for anything it might "do": "a book does not make gelatine soup; a novel is not a pair of seamless boots; a sonnet, a syringe with a continuous jet; or a drama, a railway."[7] A similar emphasis on the non-utility of art informs Edgar Allan Poe's essay "The Poetic Principle" which enjoyed enormous popularity in France where it influenced such writers as Baudelaire and Mallarmé. After denouncing what he calls the "heresy of the didactic" (the idea that every poem should inculcate a moral), Poe goes on to insist that the true test of poetic merit is not utility but the artistry of the poem itself, "this very poem -- this poem per se -- this poem which is a poem and nothing more -- this poem written solely for the poem's sake."[8]

Although the most vehement denunciation of utility in art came from the French, it was not long before English writers like Swinburne, Pater, and Wilde began to advocate the emancipation of art from all the pragmatic ends to which it had for so long been tied. Swinburne, for example, who as a young man read both Gautier and Baudelaire, became an enthusiastic exponent of l'art pour l'art during the 1860's. The most famous expression of his early aesthetic stance is his Essay on Blake in which he argues that, while art might possibly have some incidental moral effect, this effect must never be allowed to become part of the author's conscious purpose:

> Art for art's sake first of all, and afterwards we may suppose all the rest shall be added to her (or if not she need hardly be overmuch concerned); but from the man who falls to artistic work with a moral purpose, shall be taken away even that which he has -- whatever of capacity for doing well in either way he may have at starting.[9]

Although it is a matter of some contention whether Swinburne ever abandoned this aesthetic stance completely, it is certainly true that his passionate devotion to the political cause of Mazzini in Italy during the next decade meant that he tended more and more to emphasize those "incidental" moral effects which he had earlier dismissed, insisting that, though they have nothing to do with the value of a poem from a strictly artistic point of view, they do not detract from its value either. His modified aesthetic position is clearly evident in his 1872 review of Victor Hugo's L'Année terrible in which he now asserts that "the doctrine of art for art is true in the positive sense, false in the negative, sound as an affirmation, unsound as a prohibition."[10] What he is suggesting, in other words, is that the doctrine of art for art's sake is legitimate insofar as it means that a poem must be judged solely according to the laws of art, but illegitimate if it means that a poem which is sound artistically is rejected solely because it deals with a moral or ethical subject.

Like Swinburne, Pater was also influenced by the French doctrine of the non-utility of art and though he never defended the idea with quite the ardor of the young Swinburne he nevertheless insisted that the artist's sole responsibility was to the

perfection of his craft. This attitude is clearly apparent, for example, in his essay on Leonardo da Vinci whom he admires for having sacrificed everything to the pursuit of beauty:

> Other artists have been as careless of present or future applause, in self-forgetfulness, or because they set moral or political ends above the ends of art; but in him this solitary culture of beauty seems to have hung upon a kind of self-love, and a carelessness in the work of art of all but art itself.[11]

Similarly, Botticelli is praised as a creator who "[set] for himself the limits within which art, undisturbed by any moral ambition, does its most sincere and surest work."[12] While it is true that in his later works Pater modified his position somewhat by acknowledging that art does have a moral function in enlarging and orienting the soul, he always insisted (unlike Swinburne who in his late criticism sometimes seems on the verge of reintroducing didacticism into art) that such an effect is referable solely to the harmony that the artist creates out of his materials, not to the nature of the materials themselves. In making the moral effect of a work contingent upon its overall harmony rather than its subject, Pater was drawing upon the Greek notion that beauty and truth are ultimately identical. This idea is particularly prominent in his last work, Plato and Platonism, in which he admires Plato for recognizing the "close connexion between what may be called the aesthetic qualities of the world about us and the formation of moral character, between aesthetics and ethics."[13]

Of all the English aesthetes, it was Wilde who went the furthest in proclaiming the independence of art from any moral purpose whatsoever. In "The Critic as Artist," for example, he has Gilbert declare that "all the arts are immoral"[14] and furthermore, that "the sphere of Art and the sphere of Ethics are absolutely distinct and separate."[15] Even the moral effect which Pater (following Plato) had argued was inherent in the harmony of the art object itself, is dismissed by Wilde who prefers Aristotle to Plato precisely because the former, he tells us, treated art "not from the moral, but from the purely aesthetic point of view."[16] Wilde even contends that Aristotle's concept of catharsis -- the idea that arousing emotions of pity and awe will have a purgative effect on the audience -- is "essentially aesthetic, and is not moral."[17]

While the believers in art for art's sake, then, were unanimous in their conviction of what the function of art was <u>not</u> -- that it was not to teach morals, expound philosophy, direct politics, or serve any useful purpose whatsoever -- they were not quite so definite in articulating exactly what its true function should be. Of course, they were all convinced in a general way that whatever else poetry might do, its primary function was simply to create an object of beauty the contemplation of which would afford the reader an experience of intense pleasure. It was in defining the nature of this pleasurable effect and how it is communicated to the reader that differences arose. According to Poe, for example, beauty in a poem inheres not in the subject

itself but in the "harmony" which the poet manages to impose upon his materials; and the way that this beauty is communicated is by producing a certain "effect," an "elevation, or excitement, of the soul" which he calls the "Poetic Sentiment."[18] While Poe is generally careful to distinguish between elevation resulting from the apprehension of beauty and emotional stimulation (what he calls "excitement of the heart") for its own sake, occasionally, as in his remark that a "certain taint of sadness is inseparably connected with all the higher manifestations of true Beauty,"[19] he seems closer to the romantic position that the aim of poetry is to incite emotion than to the aesthetic one that harmony of expression is an end in itself. From a historical point of view, however, the real significance of Poe's concept of the function of poetry lies in the impact that it had on Baudelaire and, through Baudelaire (who translated Poe's works during the 50's), on the later symbolist poets. The precise way in which Poe's insistence on the importance of creating an "effect" actually helped to shape the kind of poetry the symbolists were writing will be investigated more fully in the next section on the nature of poetry.

Like the symbolists, the English aesthetes also held that the principal function of a poem is to give pleasure by its sheer existence as an object of beauty. In the case of Pater, for example, this idea is clearly at the bottom of his insistence that the value of art inheres in its ability to provide a variety of exquisite and refined sensations that are not otherwise available in real life. It is precisely this capacity of art for eliciting

new and pleasurable sensations, for example, that becomes the principle by which Pater measures the artistic contribution of each of the figures he chooses to discuss in the Renaissance. Announcing this approach in the preface, he goes on to observe that the business of the aesthetic critic is to regard

> all the objects with which he has to do, all works of art, and the fairer forms of nature and human life, as powers or forces producing pleasurable sensations, each of a more or less peculiar or unique kind.[20]

A similar emphasis on the importance of art in affording beautiful sensations is apparent in his essay on Botticelli where he asks, "What is the peculiar sensation, what is the peculiar quality of pleasure, which his work has the property of exciting in us, and which we cannot get elsewhere?"[21]

Wilde, too, held that the principle function of a piece of art is its capacity, as an object of beauty, to give pleasure. Where his approach differs from that of Pater -- and here, as we shall see, he is close to a position that was to be taken by Eliot -- is in ascribing the beauty of art to the unique "emotions" that it makes available, emotions that are not otherwise available in life. As he explains in "The Critic as Artist," life is a failure because there

> one can never repeat exactly the same emotion. How different it is in the world of Art! . . . There is no mood or passion that Art cannot give us, and those of us who have discovered her secret can settle beforehand what our experiences are going to be.[22]

The same idea is implicit in his observation later in the essay

that "the aim of art is simply to create a mood."[23]

Before concluding this discussion of the aesthetes' concept of the function of art, it is important to notice the way in which some of them began to take what had originally been an attempt to establish the independence of art a step further by asserting the supremacy of art over all other human values. That is, in pursuing art for its own sake, they became increasingly convinced that art was all-sufficient, that it was more capable than life itself of fulfilling all human needs and aspirations. This emphasis on the supremacy of art is reflected in the way that some of these writers began to insist that life should be lived in the spirit of art, that the end not only of art but of life itself should be the attainment of a state of passive contemplation of the beautiful. Such a confusion between the aims of art and of life is apparent, for example, in Pater's essay on Wordsworth in which he recommends as an approach to life the kind of impassive contemplation that is normally associated with the experience of art:

> That the end of life is not action but contemplation -- being as distinct from doing -- a certain disposition of the mind: is, in some shape or other, the principle of all the higher morality. In poetry, in art, if you enter into their true spirit at all, you touch this principle, in a measure: these, by their very sterility, are a type of beholding for the mere joy of beholding. To treat life in the spirit of art, is to make life a thing in which means and ends are identified: to encourage such treatment, the true moral significance of art and poetry.[24]

The tendency to elevate art to a supreme position in the scale of human values is even more evident in Pater's disciple, Wilde, who goes all the way and declares frankly that life is

inferior to art, that "from the artistic point of view" life is a failure.[25] It is precisely this idea that, compared to art, life is crude and imperfect that is at the bottom of Wilde's entire argument in "The Decay of Lying" against any sort of realism in literature:

> . . . the more we study Art, the less we care for Nature. What art really reveals to us is Nature's lack of design, her curious crudities, her extraordinary monotony, her absolutely unfinished condition. . . . Art is our spirited protest, our gallant attempt to teach Nature her proper place.[26]

And like Pater, Wilde prefers the passive contemplative experience of art to any direct encounter with real life:

> Life! Life! Don't let us go to life for our fulfilment or our experience. It is a thing narrowed by circumstances, incoherent in its utterance, and without that fine correspondence of form and spirit which is the only thing that can satisfy the artistic and critical temperament. . . . It is through Art, and through Art only that we can realise our perfection; through Art and through Art only, that we can shield ourselves from the sordid perils of actual existence.[27]

The Nature of Poetry

Speaking generally, the aesthetes tended to believe that form in poetry should take precedence over content; that the way a poet expresses himself -- the way that he uses such formal devices as sound, rhythm, rhyme, and imagery to evoke precise states of feeling -- is ultimately more important than his ideas or observations themselves. The relationship of this tendency to value form at the expense of content to the general emphasis on

entertainment and non-utility in art that we have just explored should be obvious: the more attention that a poet pays to the ideas with which he is working, the more he will be tempted to pursue those ideas as ends in themselves, a pursuit that will eventually lead him out of the realm of poetry altogether into that of some utilitarian discipline like religion or philosophy which he had set out, so conscientiously, to avoid. Of course, in actual practice, writers tended to differ significantly in the way that they viewed the relationship between form and matter, some insisting that one should so penetrate the other that the two would become indistinguishable, others elevating the importance of form to such an extent that content becomes a matter of virtual indifference.

Just as Poe had been one of the earliest advocates of non-utility in art, so he was also one of the first to argue that form should take precedence over matter in a poem. Such an emphasis on form, on the poet's ability to manipulate such expressive devices as sound, rhythm, rhyme, and imagery is, of course, thoroughly consistent with his belief, noted earlier, that the end of a poem is to generate a unified emotional effect, an "elevation of the soul." Nowhere is his preoccupation with form and effect better illustrated than in his account in "The Philosophy of Composition" of how his own poem, "The Raven," was composed, working backward from the form to the thought and feeling rather than vice versa.[28] It remains to investigate more fully the implications that this emphasis on form had, in practical terms, on his concept of poetry.

Speaking generally, Poe's theoretical position regarding the importance of form and effect led him to stress the importance of two qualities in particular in poetry. First of all, he tended to place a great premium on brevity in a poem, even going so far as to suggest that, since emotional intensity is difficult to sustain for more than a few moments, a long poem is "simply a flat contradiction in terms."[29] This idea had an important impact on the French symbolists who, reading Poe's essays in translation during the 1860's, confined their efforts for the most part, to the production of the short lyric.

An even more important consequence of his preoccupation with form or expression, however, was his tendency to stress the lyrical or incantatory element in poetry. Accordingly, in language that was to be echoed by nearly every subsequent aesthetic critic, he proposed the notion that, because of all the arts, music is the one least dependent for its effect on content, it is the condition which poetry must constantly strive to emulate: "there can be little doubt that in the union of Poetry with Music in its popular sense we shall find the widest field for the Poetic development."[30] Just how much of an impact this emphasis on music had on the French symbolists is apparent from the way that it constitutes the central thesis of one of the most important manifestos of the symbolist aesthetic, Paul Verlaine's "Art Poétique":

> De la musique avant toute chose,
> Et pour cela préfère l'Impair
> Plus vague et plus soluble dans l'air,
> Sans rien en lui qui pèse ou qui pose.[31]

This idea that form should predominate over matter and that music is the art in which this condition is most fully realized was soon echoed by writers in England. Of these, Swinburne generally took the most conservative approach to the problem of form and matter always insisting that, to be good, a poem must not only "sing" but must display what he calls a "harmony," a balance, between form and content:

> There never was and will never be a poet who had verbal harmony and nothing else; if there was in him no inner depth or strength or truth, then that which men took for music in his mere speech was no such thing as music.[32]

But if Swinburne favored a balance between form and content, Pater went considerably further, always maintaining that the ideal poem is one in which form prevails over what he consistently refers to as the "mere matter." The fullest expression of this idea occurs in the essay "The School of Giorgione" in which, after putting forward his famous axiom that "all art constantly aspires towards the condition of music," he goes on to observe that lyric poetry most nearly fulfills this condition because

> in it we are least able to distinguish matter from the form, without a deduction of something from the matter itself. . . . [T]he very perfection of such poetry often appears to depend, in part, on a certain suppression or vagueness of mere subject, so that the meaning reaches us through ways not distinctly traceable by the understanding. . . .[33]

One exception to this general emphasis on the supremacy of form is the comparatively late essay "Style" in which Pater now makes a distinction between what he calls "good art" (art in which "it is impossible to distinguish the form from the substance or matter")

and "great art" (art which depends not only on the form but "on the quality of the matter it informs or controls, its compass, its variety, its alliance to great ends").[34]

As usual, however, it was Wilde who pushed the aesthetic doctrines to their extreme and this controversy over the relation of form to matter was no exception. To begin with, he consistently advocated a non-mimetic approach to poetry, a poetry removed as far as possible from the real world and therefore one in which the interest in content would be at an absolute minimum:

> As long as a thing is useful or necessary to us, or affects us in any way, either for pain or for pleasure, or appeals strongly to our sympathies, or is a vital part of the environment in which we live, it is outside the proper sphere of art. To art's subject-matter we should be more or less indifferent.[55]

As would be expected, this virtual dismissal of the importance of content in a poem was accompanied by a correspondingly exaggerated emphasis on the role of form. In the last analysis, it would seem that for Wilde, at least, form becomes everything, matter nothing:

> For the real artist is he who proceeds, not from feeling to form, but from form to thought and passion. He does not first conceive an idea, and then say to himself, 'I will put my idea into a complex metre of fourteen lines,' but, realizing the beauty of the sonnet-scheme, he conceives certain modes of music and methods of rhyme, and the mere form suggests what is to fill it and make it intellectually and emotionally complete.[36]

While aesthetes in France and England alike, then, were generally agreed that form or expression in poetry should take precedence over content, they were aware at the same time that a complete suppression of subject matter would spell the destruction

of poetry altogether. What they did, instead (and this tendency is apparent in the works of both the English Pre-Raphaelites and the French symbolists) was to abandon as subject matter the harsh world of ordinary reality for an inner world of imaginative vision and mystical perception. The fact, however, that this was an ideal world, a world beyond the senses, meant that it could never be described directly; the best a poet could do was to convey an emotional impression of that world by creating an atmosphere of mystery and spiritual suggestiveness. In practice this was accomplished through the use of such devices as the deliberate mingling of dream and reality, the excision of prosaic connectives or explanations of any kind, the use of symbols (ordinary objects endowed with emotional or spiritual significations) and the creation of a tone of incantation.

This tendency to renounce the external world in favour of a private world of imaginative and emotional experience is evident in the work of virtually all the symbolist poets. Baudelaire, for example, though unprecedented in the directness with which he deals with the sordid aspects of urban existence, is fond at the same time of pitting the ugliness of this world against an imaginative world of ideal beauty. Nowhere is this tendency more apparent than in "Paysage" which depicts a poet, locked away in his private garret, building with his imagination an ideal world that is in marked contrast to the harsh reality around him:

> Alors je rêverai des horizons bleuâtres,
> Des jardins, des jets d'eau pleurant dans les albâtres,
> Des baisers, des oiseaux chantant soir et matin,
> Et tout ce que l'Idylle a de plus enfantin.

L'Émeute, tempêtant vainement à ma vitre,
Ne fera pas lever mon front de mon pupitre;
Car je serai plongé dans cette volupté
D'évoquer le Printemps avec ma volonté,
De tirer un soleil de mon coeur, et de faire
De mes pensers brûlants une tiède atmosphère.[37]

The same theme is apparent in the two poems entitled "L'Invitation au Voyage" both of which are expressions of intense longing for escape into a kind of earthly paradise, an ideal world, where "tout n'est qu'ordre et beauté,/Luxe, calme et volupté."[38] Baudelaire is important, too, for introducing some of the techniques used by the later symbolists in evoking this world of inner reality, techniques such as the mingling of phantasy and reality (apparent in "Le Balcon" and "Le Chevelure" with their abnormal dreamlike atmosphere) and the use of symbols drawn from external reality to convey inner states of emotional and spiritual awareness. The latter technique is fully explained in "Correspondances," a poem which was destined to become a virtual manifesto of the symbolist aesthetic and which depicts nature as

un temple où de vivants piliers
Laissent parfois sortir de confuses paroles;
L'homme y passe à travers des forêts de symboles
Qui l'observent avec des regards familiers.[39]

The tendency to renounce the experience of the outer world for the experience of the imagination is even more clearly pronounced in the work of Baudelaire's disciple, Stéphane Mallarmé. Almost invariably, for example, the world of objective reality in Mallarmé's poetry is presented as something sordid and disgusting which, like a wall, comes between the poet and his vision of a transcendent world of ideal beauty. Though the poet in "L'Azur,"

for instance, makes a valiant effort to settle for the satisfactions of material existence ("Vers toi, j'accours! donne, ô matière,/ L'oubli de l'Idéal cruel et du Péché") he finds, in the end, that he cannot forget his vision of the ideal (symbolized by the blue sky) which continues to haunt him like a dream:

> En vain! l'Azur triomphe, et je l'entends qui chante
> Dans les cloches. Mon âme, il se fait voix pour plus
> Nous faire peur avec sa victoire méchante,
> Et du métal vivant sort en bleus angélus![40]

This dilemma is presented even more clearly in "Les Fenêtres" where the poet, in his quest after the unattainable ideal, is compared to a dying patient who sees from the windows of his sickroom a magnificent sunset which he knows he can never experience directly. Far from being an incentive to habituate himself to the temporal world, however, the knowledge that the ideal is unattainable only makes the poet more conscious than ever of the sordid leaden reality which holds him prisoner:

> Mais, hélas! Ici-bas est maître: sa hantise
> Vient m'écoeurer parfois jusqu'en cet abri sûr,
> Et le vomissement impur de la Bêtise
> Me force à me boucher le nez devant l'azur.[41]

That Mallarmé is indeed dealing with the inner world of the mind is apparent, finally, from his use of various technical devices intended to convey the irrational movement of thought in the mind, devices such as the suppression of explanatory and connective matter of any kind, the presentation of highly disparate images in rapid succession, and the mingling of dream and reality. Nowhere is the latter device better illustrated than in the famous "L'Après-midi d'un Faune," a poem which describes the deliberations of a faun who,

upon awakening at daybreak, tries to recall whether his experience of having been visited the previous afternoon by nymphs was real or imaginary.

The same kind of abandonment of the external world for an inner world of psychological reality is apparent in the works of the other symbolist poets as well. This tendency is well illustrated, for example, by Verlaine's "Dans les Bois" where the external world loses its traditional status as a solid independent reality becoming, instead, a mere projection of the speaker's inner state of anxiety and foreboding: the red sunset is associated with fire and blood, the angelus "semble un cri plaintif se rapprochant," and the spring waters are associated with the sounds of "assassins postés se concertant."[42] In the same way, too, the barren winter landscape of "feuilles rouillées" and "bois mort" in Laforgue's "Couchant d'hiver" functions, not as an objective description of the external world, but as a complex symbol for the speaker's inner state of bitterness and despair.[43] A final example of the way the symbolists tended to substitute for the external world a subjective world of their own making is Corbière's "Paysage Mauvais." Far from being described directly, the various objects in this landscape are endowed with the nightmarish interpretations of the speaker:

> Sables de vieux os -- Le flot râle
> Des glas: crevant bruit sur bruit . . .
> -- Palud pâle, ou la lune avale
> De gros vers pour passer la nuit.[44]

Like the productions of the French symbolists, the poetry of the English aesthetes reflects a similar impulse to renounce the experience of the outside world for the experience of the mind alone.

But whereas the French (particularly Baudelaire and Mallarmé) had sought release in a transcendent world of ideal beauty, the English aesthetes on the whole found their escape from the hideous realities of Victorian England in an imaginary world of romantic medievalism. One of the first of the English aesthetes to make extensive use of medieval themes in conjuring up an atmosphere of remoteness and unreality was D.G. Rossetti. The quality of Rossetti's medievalism is well illustrated by such poems as "The Blessed Damozel" (where the conspicuous symbolism -- the lady holds three lilies, has seven stars in her hair, and wears a white rose -- is used to evoke an aura of Dantesque mysticism), "Sister Helen" and "The Staff and the Scrip." The retreat into a faraway world of chivalry and romance is even more pronounced in the works of William Morris whose first volume, The Defence of Guenevere and Other Poems, for example, consists largely of episodes reworked from the two best known collections of medieval legend, Malory's Morte Darthur and the Chroniques of Froissart. The essentially aesthetic orientation of Morris's poetry, however, is most evident in his last major work, The Earthly Paradise, which consists of a collection of tales told by a group of medieval Norse wanderers who, having left their plague-stricken homeland, set out in search of an earthly paradise, a land where there is neither suffering nor death. The aesthetic character of the work, with its tendency to avoid the problems of contemporary society by retreating into a private world of the imagination, is well summed up in the comment of one critic who writes that

> the book embodies the view that, to the extent the earthly paradise can be found at all, it is as the paradise of art. The telling of tales, the summing up of the poetic accomplishments of the race, create the only paradise, the only approach to perfection that man can know. Art alone is eternal; we achieve the illusion of eternity only in it.[45]

While the poetry of the English aesthetes, then, shared with that of the symbolists a concentration on the inner world of the mind, it tended in most aspects of technique (particularly in its much stronger emphasis on the element of narration) to diverge rather widely. One feature of style, however, which it did have in common with the productions of the French symbolists was an incantatory quality, an interest in singing for singing's sake. This tendency is well illustrated by such poems as William Morris's "The Blue Closet" and "The Tune of Seven Towers," poems in which the main interest is not the narrative but the strange hypnotic music that Morris manages to weave out of sound and color. Such an emphasis on incantation becomes even more pronounced in the poetry of Swinburne whose choice of imagery and diction often seems governed less by considerations of thought and meaning than by an awareness of the potential of a particular word or phrase for musical development. This kind of preoccupation with words for their sheer sound value is evident, for example, in such poems as "Hendecasyllabics" (where, in reference to the evening sky, he writes of "Flame as fierce as the fervid eyes of lions/Half divid-[ing] the eyelids of the sunset"[46]), "Evening by the Sea" (in which he describes how "The sad sun/In a sick doubt of color lay/Across the water's belt of dun"[47]), and "The Triumph of Time" (which includes a description of the sea as a place "Where faint sounds

falter and wan beams wade,/Break, and are broken, and shed into showers"[48]). As T.S. Eliot was to point out, the result of this concentration on words for their musical value alone is that in Swinburne's poetry the "emotion is never particular, never in direct line of vision, never focused; it is emotion reinforced, not by intensification, but by expansion."[49] The extent to which Eliot, while preserving a Swinburnian interest in the incantatory power of words, was yet able in his own poetry to communicate precise emotions will be examined in detail in Chapter Three.

The Role of the Poet

In view of the fact that the believers in art for art's sake were committed overwhelmingly to what I have defined as a subjective or non-mimetic theory of poetry, it follows that they would place a great emphasis on the individual temperament or personality of the poet. Actually, the reasons for this concern with personality are two.

First is the fact that instead of being regarded as a mere copyist (as he would be in the case of objective poetry), the subjective poet takes on the status of a kind of creator, fashioning out of his private impressions of reality a whole new world of the imagination. Clearly, to perform this task successfully, such a poet would have to have a powerful personality, capable not only of receiving numerous and unique impressions from the world around him but of imposing upon these impressions a new and compelling unity

all his own. It is for precisely this ability of remaking external reality in accordance with his own inner vision, for example, that Pater admires the Renaissance artist, Botticelli:

> To him, as to Dante, the scene, the colour, the outward image or gesture, comes with all its incisive and importunate reality; but awakes in him, moreover, by some subtle law of his own structure, a mood which it awakes in no one else . . .[50]

Similarly, Pater attributes the unparalleled artistry of Leonardo da Vinci to his powerful personality, to the fact that "out of the secret places of a unique temperament he brought strange blossoms and fruits hitherto unknown."[51] However, Pater's strongest statement concerning the importance of personality in art, and one in which the idea is worked out specifically in terms of literature, is the essay on Style:

> Literary art, that is, like all art which is in any way imitative or reproductive of fact -- form, or colour, or incident -- is the representation of such fact as connected with soul, of a specific personality, in its preferences, its volition and power.[52]

The same notion that art is the product of a powerful personality imposing upon the fleeting phenomena of existence its own unique way of seeing also informs much of Wilde's criticism such as Gilbert's observations in "The Critic as Artist" to the effect that "as art springs from personality, so it is only to personality that it can be revealed"[53] and that, in the last analysis, "all artistic creation is absolutely subjective. The very landscape that Corot looked at was, as he said himself, but a mood of his own mind."[54]

But in addition to emphasizing the notion that a poet must have a powerful personality capable of remaking the world in accordance with his own inner vision, the aesthetes focused attention on the poet in a second way by underlining the laborious craftsmanship, the patient working and reworking of material, that is required if a poet is to succeed in communicating his unique apprehension of reality to the reader. By insisting that the composition of a poem is a deliberate and conscious process and that the poet should always observe himself in the process of composition, the aesthetes were largely reacting against the romantic notion that good poetry must be written spontaneously in a fit of inspiration. On the contrary -- and this, of course, goes hand in hand with the general emphasis on form and the importance of creating an "effect" that we have already noticed -- the aesthetes made much of a poet's technique, of his ability to manipulate such formal devices as meter, rhythm, sound, and imagery. One of the earliest and most influential examples of this fascination with the process of composition itself was Poe's Philosophy of Composition, an essay in which, after dismissing the romantic preoccupation with spontaneity, he proceeds to outline step by step the painstaking process by which he composed his own poem, "The Raven."

In comparison to Poe and the French poets who felt his influence, the English opted in favor of a somewhat more balanced approach to the process of composition, one that would take into account both the element of spontaneity in creation as well as the importance of deliberate and painstaking craftsmanship. This

balanced approach to the process of composition is apparent, for example, in Pater's theory of poetry, a theory which gives due recognition to the element of spontaneity, at least in the initial conception of the work, but recognizes at the same time the intense and patient labour required to transform that conception into an actual poem. The first, the spontaneous element in the process of creation, is apparent, for example, in his essay on Leonardo in which he talks about how the great artist would "never work till that happy moment [came] -- that moment of bien-être, which to imaginative men is a moment of invention."[55] At the same time, however, he always recognized that inspiration in itself is not enough, that a good poem always requires a good deal of plain hard work. It is Coleridge's failure to acknowledge this element of deliberate artistry in the process of creation, for example, that leads Pater to call his theory "one-sided" because

> in it the artist has become almost a mechanical agent: instead of the most luminous and self-possessed phase of consciousness, the associative act in art or poetry is made to look like some blindly organic process of assimilation. The work of art is likened to a living organism. That expresses truly the sense of a self-delighting, independent life which the finished work of art gives us: it hardly figures the process by which such work was produced. Here there is no blind ferment of lifeless elements towards the realization of a type. By exquisite analysis the artist attains clearness of idea; then, through many stages of refining, clearness of expression.[56]

Wilde, too, rejected the notion that spontaneity in art is sufficient, maintaining instead that "all fine imaginative work is self-conscious and that "self-consciousness and the critical spirit are one."[57]

The Purpose of Criticism

Of all aspects of the aesthetic movement, the view of the aesthetes regarding the purpose of criticism is the least susceptible of easy generalization. This is because, though they wrote a vast amount of practical criticism, they seldom engaged in theoretical discussions about the function of the literary critic. One thing, however, which turns up in their writings over and over again is the notion that the starting point for any sort of literary appreciation is not an appeal to some abstract definition of beauty but an immediate and intense experience of the work itself. And in order for such an experience to occur, they argued, the critic involved must, beyond anything else, possess an extraordinary sensibility to beauty, a capacity for gathering from each work encountered as many impressions as it is able to offer. It is what the critic is supposed to do with these impressions once they have been formed that became a matter of some controversy amongst critics.

Swinburne, at least to judge from the example of his own practice, seems to have believed that the impressions arising from a work should be used for the purpose of analyzing that work and arriving at some definite judgment of it. This is not, of course, to say that he was entirely innocent of the charge, so often levelled against the aesthetes, of using impressions derived from a work as raw material for a new creation designed to resurrect the original in another form. Nor was he entirely blameless of the habit

of using criticism, from time to time, as a platform for presenting some idea of his own, attacking one of his critics, or delving into the life or age of the writer under study. However, it is probably true, as Eliot was to point out, that of all the critics writing in England at this time, he was the one whose eye was most trained on the work before him:

> You may say this [i.e. Swinburne's criticism] is not the criticism of a critic, that it is emotional, not intellectual -- though of this there are two opinions, but it is in the direction of analysis and construction, a beginning to "ériger en lois," and not in the direction of creation.[58]

Typical of Swinburne's approach, for example, is his essay on Beaumont and Fletcher which, despite a long biographical introduction and a digression on physiognomy, is devoted, for the most part, to a detailed comparison of the two writers in terms both of outlook and style. He tells us, for example, that

> to Beaumont his stars had given as birthright the gifts of tragic pathos and passion, of tender power and broad strong humour; to Fletcher had been allotted a more fiery and fruitful force of invention, a more aerial ease and swiftness of action, a more various readiness and fulness of bright exuberant speech. The genius of Beaumont was deeper, sweeter, nobler than his elder's: the genius of Fletcher more brilliant, more supple, more prodigal and more voluble than his friend's.[59]

Though for the most part Swinburne is content to deal in generalities of this kind, he can be quite specific and technical as in his attempt to demonstrate that Fletcher's collaborator in writing Thierry and Theodoret was not Beaumont but Massinger because the work exhibits such stylistic features of the former as

> the excess of parenthetic sentences, no less than five in a space of twenty lines; the classical commonplace of allusion to Athens, Rome, and Sparta in one superfluous breath; the pure and vigorous but somewhat level and prosaic order of language, with the use of certain cheap and easy phrases familiar to Massinger as catchwords; the flat and feeble terminations by means of which the final syllable of one verse runs on into the next without more pause or rhythm than in a passage of prose; the general dignity and gravity of sustained and measured expression.[60]

The notion that, in order to judge a work, one must experience it as intensely and immediately as possible, also became the underlying principle of Pater's criticism. The idea is clearly announced, for example, in the preface to the Renaissance where he amends Arnold's famous dictum that the aim of criticism is "to see the object as in itself it really is" by proposing that the first step in realizing that aim is "to know one's own impression as it really is."[61] Having once realized one's impressions of a work as fully as possible, Pater goes on to suggest that the next step in the critical process is to analyze these impressions using them as a way of ascertaining the peculiar essence or "virtue" of that work:

> The function of the aesthetic critic is to distinguish, to analyse, and separate from its adjuncts, the virtue by which a picture, a landscape, a fair personality in life or in a book, produces this special impression of beauty or pleasure, to indicate what the source of that impression is, and under what conditions it is experienced. His end is reached when he has disengaged that virtue, and noted it, as a chemist notes some natural element, for himself and others. . . .[62]

Although this process of definition may be the end as far as the particular work is concerned, Pater suggests later in the preface

that, in its most general sense, the goal of a critic is to determine what he variously calls the "formula," the "active principle," or the "virtue" of a particular writer, that is, the most prominent characteristic of his work which sets it apart from that of every other writer.[63] An examination of Pater's own criticism throughout his career reveals that he followed this approach with remarkable consistency, finding, for example, the "active principle" in Wordsworth's poetry to be a "strange, mystical sense of a life in natural things,"[64] in the works of Coleridge to be a "disinterested struggle against the relative spirit,"[65] and in the writings of Plato to be a "sensuous love of the unseen."[66] Indeed, Pater's criticism was governed by this pursuit after the "formula" of a writer to such an extent that, in the final analysis, it is probably fair to say that, for all his emphasis on experiencing a work directly, his real interest -- and indeed, his real genius -- lay not in analyzing the work itself but in defining the unique temperament of its creator. The result is that in Pater's criticism one seldom sees the object directly but is compelled to infer its nature from the penetrating insights that are provided into the mind of the artist.

Like Swinburne and Pater, Wilde also emphasizes the importance of gaining firsthand impressions of a work rather than relying on abstract definitions in forming literary judgments. But while he does acknowledge that one of the legitimate activities of the critic is to use these impressions for the purpose of "analysis or

exposition," the overall tenor of his remarks is to downplay this aspect of criticism, consigning it to what he calls the "lower sphere" of critical activity.[67] Instead, what he considers to be by far the most important function of the critic is to take these impressions gathered from the original work and use them as "a starting-point for a new creation" of his own.[68] The upshot of this insistence that a critic must be both a creator and an interpretor at the same time is that Wilde denies the legitimacy of a possible distinction between creation and criticism altogether. As a result, he is able to claim that just as criticism is inevitably creative, so (and this, as we shall see, is an idea that is picked up by Eliot) creation itself is impossible without that "spirit of choice, that subtle tact of omission"[69] which not only helps an artist to select his material in the first place but to edit his work after it is completed. It is thoroughly in keeping with the extreme subjectivism of Wilde's entire theory of poetry that he should go on in the same dialogue to look forward enthusiastically to the time when most art will be of the critical rather than the creative variety, drawing its inspiration from other art rather than from life:

> I am certain that, as civilisation progresses and we become more highly organised, the elect spirits of each age, the critical and cultured spirits, will grow less and less interested in actual life, and will seek to gain their impressions almost entirely from what Art has touched.[70]

Viewed in its broadest sense, then, the aesthetic movement may be described as an attempt to alter the prevailing attitude towards the function of poetry by insisting that, far from being a

mere slave to religion, philosophy, or politics, poetry is something of independent value capable of offering unique experiences not otherwise available in life. This altered attitude towards the function of poetry, this idea that poetry should not involve itself with anything of a practical or utilitarian nature, led, in turn, to a preference for what might be called a subjective type of poetry in which the emphasis was on form rather than content and which depended for its existence not on an accurate mimesis of nature but on the poet's ability to "remake" reality in accordance with his own inner vision. It is time now to turn to Eliot's criticism and to observe the way in which he modified this approach to poetry, retaining the aesthetes' fundamental belief in the integrity of art, but insisting at the same time, that unless it draws upon something outside of itself, art is in danger of becoming nothing more than an abstraction.

II. ELIOT'S CRITICAL IDEAS IN THE TRADITION OF AESTHETICISM

The best way to begin an examination of Eliot's use of aesthetic ideas is with an analysis of exactly what, in the way of explicit commentary, he had to say about the doctrine of art for art's sake. A survey of the rather numerous references to aestheticism in his critical writing reveals that, over the years, he was remarkably consistent both in what he thought was valid about the movement and in what he regarded as its shortcomings. Almost invariably, Eliot takes the position that the doctrine of art for art's sake is valid insofar as it is a recognition of the integrity of art, of the fact that art is something of independent value and not merely the servant of some other discipline like philosophy, ethics, or religion. In what is otherwise a highly critical essay on the aestheticism of Arnold and Pater, for instance, Eliot writes that the "theory . . . of 'art for art's sake' is still valid in so far as it can be taken as an exhortation to the artist to stick to his job."[1] He concludes the same essay with the remark that the "right practice of 'art for art's sake' was the devotion of Flaubert or Henry James" (S.E., p. 443). A similar recognition of the validity of aesthetic doctrine also informs his lecture three years later on The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism in which he argues that the doctrine of 'art for art's sake' "contained this true impulse behind it, that it is a

recognition of the error of the poet's trying to do other people's work."[2]

But while Eliot applauded the aesthetes for their efforts to assert the autonomy of art, he was more often than not highly critical of the movement as a whole. Stated simply, his objection to the aesthetes was that they carried their program for the emancipation of art too far, that instead of contenting themselves with establishing art as just one legitimate aspect of human endeavor, they attempted to elevate it to a position of supreme importance so that it became a substitute for virtually everything else. The ultimate result of such an attempt to make art all-sufficient, according to Eliot, was that it forced the artist to do the jobs of several people -- the philosopher, the moralist, the metaphysician -- all at once, thereby destroying the very kind of artistic purity that the aesthetes had set out to achieve so assiduously in the first place. In Eliot's view, the critic who was most guilty of trying to make art do too many things at once, was Walter Pater. For example, on one occasion, after quoting his famous conclusion to The Renaissance -- "Of this wisdom, the poetic passion, the desire of beauty, the love of art for art's sake has most; for art comes to you professing frankly to give nothing but the highest quality to your moments as they pass, and simply for those moments' sake" -- Eliot goes on to charge that what Pater offers here is not really a defense of art at all, but a "theory of ethics" (S.E., p. 439). Similarly, in "Baudelaire," an essay written at about the same time, Eliot argues that the doctrine of

art for art's sake "does not . . . really apply to anybody; no one applied it less than Pater, who spent many years, not so much in illustrating it, as in expounding it as a theory of life which is not the same thing at all" (S.E., p. 420). Finally, over ten years later in an essay on Samuel Johnson, Eliot was still repeating essentially the same charge: that the doctrine of art for art's sake, because in practice it became a philosophy of life rather than of art, was really only a "variation under the guise of a protest" of the old standard that art should be edifying.

While the question of whether Eliot's criticism of aestheticism is really fair to the movement as a whole need not detain us here (though, as was noted earlier, such a tendency to confuse art and life was without question typical of at least some of the later aesthetes), what is important for our purposes is the fact that Eliot never actually repudiated the fundamental doctrine of aestheticism: the idea that art should be regarded, not as an adjunct to some other discipline like philosophy or religion, but as an activity with a unique and independent life of its own. The centrality of this concept of the integrity of art to Eliot's theory of poetry as a whole, as well as the way in which he gradually modified it in order to avoid the same sort of confusions with which he had charged the aesthetes, will become clearer as we go on now to study Eliot's criticism in terms of the four rubrics that were used earlier in defining aestheticism: the function of poetry, the nature of poetry, the role of the poet, and the purpose of criticism.

The Function of Poetry

Like many of his aesthetic predecessors, Eliot tended to concentrate, at least in his early criticism, on the negative task of demonstrating what functions poetry, as an independent discipline, should not be expected to perform. His usual approach to this task is to point out that art is not something separate from life, but merely one of the many activities which together comprise life, no one of which can really serve as a substitute for any other. Therefore, he insists, even if it is not possible to define the precise function of poetry in positive terms, it is still a legitimate part of the critic's task to point out when poetry is not fulfilling its function. One of Eliot's clearest statements of what poetry should not do occurs in "Shakespeare and the Stoicism of Seneca" where he insists that "[p]oetry is not a substitute for philosophy or theology or religion . . . ; it has its own function. But as this function is not intellectual but emotional, it cannot be defined adequately in intellectual terms" (S.E., pp. 137-38). But undoubtedly the most elaborate of what might be called Eliot's negative definitions of the function of poetry is to be found in the "Preface" to the 1928 edition of The Sacred Wood where he writes that

> when we are considering poetry we must consider it primarily as poetry and not another thing. . . . It will not do to talk of "emotion recollected in tranquility," which is only one poet's account of his recollection of his own methods; or to call it a "criticism of life," than which no phrase can sound more frigid to anyone who has felt the full surprise and elevation of a new experience of poetry. And

> certainly poetry is not the inculcation of morals, or the direction of politics; and no more is it religion or an equivalent of religion, except by some monstrous abuse of words. And certainly poetry is something over and above, and something quite different from, a collection of psychological data about the minds of poets, or about the history of an epoch.[4]

But while Eliot, like the aesthetes before him, spent a great deal of effort, particularly in his early criticism, explaining what poetry is <u>not</u> intended to do -- that it is not primarily intended to deal with politics and morals or to expound philosophy -- he also attempted from time to time to formulate some positive statement that would explain what function, in his opinion, poetry should perform. Most often -- and in this respect, he is fully within the aesthetic tradition -- he argues that the primary end of poetry is simply the pleasure to be derived from contemplating the "beautiful expression of particular sensation and perception, general emotion and impersonal ideas."[5] This idea that the primary purpose of poetry is simply to afford pleasure is clearly evident, for example, in "The Perfect Critic," an early essay in which Eliot states that the "end of the enjoyment of poetry is a pure contemplation from which all the accidents of personal emotion are removed" (S.W., pp. 14-15). A similar conviction that the primary purpose of poetry is to entertain clearly informs Eliot's observation in "Wilkie Collins and Dickens" that we "cannot afford to forget that the first -- and not one of the least difficult -- requirements of either prose or verse is that it should be interesting" (S.E., p. 470). But the fullest expression

of this idea that the first duty of poetry is simply to give pleasure, is contained in Eliot's definition of poetry in the 1928 "Preface" to The Sacred Wood:

> Poetry is a superior amusement: I do not mean an amusement for superior people. I call it an amusement, an amusement pour distraire les honnêtes gens, not because that is a true definition, but because if you call it anything else you are likely to call it something still more false (S.W., pp. viii-ix).

Although the notion that the primary purpose of poetry is to delight, receives somewhat less emphasis in Eliot's later criticism, it is nevertheless an idea that continues to shape his thinking about poetry to the end. In The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism (1933), for example, while he acknowledges that some poets "have used their art . . . with designs of instruction or persuasion," he goes on to insist that, above all else, "a poet wishes to give pleasure, to entertain or divert people" (U.P.U.C., p. 31). Later in the same lecture he suggests that a poet "would like to be something of a popular entertainer" (U.P.U.C., p. 154), a comparison that could be added to a long list of similar instances in which Eliot uses the analogy of the music-hall comedian to convey his fundamental belief in the entertainment value of literature. The fact that Eliot never abandoned the fundamental aesthetic belief in the entertainment value of literature is clear, finally, from the unqualified approval which he gives in his "Introduction" to Valéry's The Art of Poetry (one of the last pieces of criticism that he wrote) to Valéry's "repeated insistence that poetry must first of all be enjoyed, if it is to be of any use

at all; that it must be enjoyed as poetry, and not for any other reason."[6]

Also like the aesthetes, Eliot tended to ascribe the capacity of literature for giving pleasure to the fact that a good work will produce a certain "effect" or create what he calls a "unique artistic emotion." Although a detailed explanation of what he meant by an artistic emotion belongs more properly to a discussion of his concept of the nature of poetry and will therefore be deferred to the next section, what is important to observe here is how closely this idea relates to some of the statements by Poe and especially Wilde which were examined earlier, statements attributing to poetry the unique ability of affording emotional experiences not otherwise available from life. An early formulation of this idea that literature offers new emotional experiences, "experience[s] different in kind from any experience not of art" (S.W., p. 54), occurs in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" where Eliot talks of the way that "the whole effect, the dominant tone" of a work "is due to the fact that a number of floating feelings, having an affinity to this emotion [i.e. the emotion inherent in the situation itself] by no means superficially evident, have combined with it to give us a new art emotion" (S.W., p. 57). The same idea is expressed again years later in the second essay on Dante where he relates how, in reading The Divine Comedy for the first time, he experienced a new emotion different from anything in life which he calls the "objective 'poetic emotion'" of the work (S.E. p. 238).

Although Eliot always maintained, then, that the first aim of poetry should be to give pleasure by offering unique emotional experiences, he also tended, particularly in his later criticism, to ascribe to poetry other incidental uses of a more pragmatic nature. Underlying this acknowledgment of the more pragmatic uses of poetry -- and differentiating his position from that of the aesthetes -- was his belief that poetry does not exist in a vacuum; that while it certainly has a life of its own, it also draws its very sustenance from other disciplines like those of philosophy, psychology, and ethics. Actually, the difference between Eliot and the aesthetes on this issue was a relative, not an absolute one: whereas the aesthetes, reacting against the public insistence that art should edify, tended to stress the separateness of poetry (while taking its relatedness more or less for granted), Eliot, writing after the doctrine of art for art's sake had been pushed to absurd extremes, tended to place more emphasis on the aspect of relatedness (while preserving, at the same time, a belief in the fundamental aesthetic doctrine of the autonomy of poetry). What might be called his modified aesthetic stance, his insistence on the separate-but-relatedness of poetry, is evident, for example, as early as "The Function of Criticism" where he argues (in a way that is reminiscent of Swinburne's position in his review of Hugo's L'Annee terrible) that "art may be affirmed to serve ends beyond itself; but art is not required to be aware of these ends, and indeed performs its function, whatever that may be . . . much better by indifference to them" (S.E., p. 24). An even clearer

indication of Eliot's growing awareness that art cannot exist in isolation from the other activities of life is the question he posed in a review in the Criterion the following year: "Is it possible and justifiable for art, the creation of beautiful objects and of literature, to persist indefinitely without its primitive purposes: is it possible for the aesthetic object to be a direct object of attention?"[7] However, the fullest expression of Eliot's position regarding the independent but relational nature of poetry -- a position which remained essentially the same for the rest of his career -- is the 1928 "Preface" to The Sacred Wood in which, after emphasizing the autonomy of poetry, the concept that "a poem, in some sense, has its own life; that its parts form something quite different from a body of neatly ordered biographical data," he goes on to observe that "[o]n the other hand, poetry as certainly has something to do with morals, and with religion, and even with politics perhaps, though we cannot say what" (S.W., p. x).

Given his notion of the separate-but-relatedness of poetry, then, it is not surprising to find Eliot suggesting that, in addition to giving pleasure, poetry also has some sort of beneficial or edifying effect upon the reader, though he is seldom very explicit about what he conceived that effect to be. What should be observed about his treatment of this subject from the onset, however, is that, like the aesthetes of the previous generation, he goes to great lengths to avoid giving the impression that he would have art deteriorate into mere didacticism. Instead, he insists

repeatedly that, if art does indeed edify, it does so incidentally with no conscious intention on the part of the author. A good example, in Eliot's opinion, of a poet who had the proper attitude towards the function of his art, who recognized that poetry might have some beneficial moral effects but that they should never be pursued for their own sake, is W.B. Yeats:

> Born into a world in which the doctrine of 'Art for Art's sake' was generally accepted, and living on into one in which art has been asked to be instrumental to social purposes, he held firmly to the right view which is between these, though not in any way a compromise between them, and showed that an artist, by serving his art with entire integrity, is at the same time rendering the greatest service he can to his own nation and to the whole world (O.P.P., p. 307).

It is particularly significant, too, that even after Eliot's conversion to Anglo-Catholicism and his increasing preoccupation with the moral implications of art, he should still argue for "a literature which should be unconsciously, rather than deliberately and defiantly, Christian" (S.E., p. 392).

Although, as I have said, Eliot seldom elaborated on this capacity of art to edify, it is generally clear that what he had in mind was the idea that art can broaden the reader's experience and even contribute to the formation of his character by encouraging him to enter into new perceptions of reality that may be markedly different from his own. Perhaps the most elaborate early expression of this idea is Eliot's observation in "Poetry and Propaganda" that we read poetry "largely for the exercise in assumption or entertaining ideas; for the enlargement and exercise of mind we get by trying to penetrate a man's thought and think it

after him, and then passing out of that experience to another."[8] But that Eliot considered this to be not merely an exercise in entertaining ideas for their own sake but a process which ultimately contributes to the moral development of the reader is indicated by his remark earlier in the essay to the effect that we tend

> to organize our tastes in various arts into a whole; we aim in the end at a theory of life, or a view of life, and so far as we are conscious, to terminate our enjoyment of the arts in a philosophy, and our philosophy in a religion -- in such a way that the personal to oneself is fused and completed in the impersonal and general, not extinguished, but enriched, expanded, developed, and more itself by becoming more something not itself (pp. 102-103).

The notion that art has a larger function, beyond that of mere entertainment, is also expressed in "The Social Function of Poetry," where Eliot points out that "every good poet, whether he be a great poet or not, has something to give us besides pleasure: for if it were only pleasure, the pleasure itself could not be of the highest kind" (O.P.P., p. 7). Finally, it is precisely because he failed to recognize the edifying function of art that Valéry, who in other ways had Eliot's deepest respect, is criticized in the latter's "Introduction" to his Art of Poetry:

> [Valéry] is deeply concerned with the problem of process, of how the poem is made, but not with the question of how it is related to the rest of life in such a way as to give the reader the shock of feeling that the poem has been to him, not merely an experience, but a serious experience. And by "experience" I mean here not an isolable event, having its value solely in itself and not in relation to anything else, but something that has entered into and been fused with a multitude of other experiences in the formation of the person that the reader is developing into.[9] (Emphasis added.)

It is important to notice in connection with this discussion of Eliot's concept of the incidental moral effects of poetry, that he did recognize that some legitimate poetry is in fact written with the deliberate intention of instructing or edifying. This idea is expressed most clearly in "The Three Voices of Poetry" where he differentiates between two types of non-dramatic poetry, between what he calls poetry of the first voice (that of the poet talking to himself or to nobody) and poetry of the second voice (that of a poet addressing an audience). (The third voice identified in the lecture, that of a dramatic character speaking in verse, pertains only to drama and need not concern us here.) In light of Eliot's definition of poetry of the first voice -- poetry, that is, "directly expressing the poet's own thoughts and sentiments" (O.P.P., p. 106) and which is not written with the conscious intention of communicating anything -- it is probably fair to say, in retrospect, that even though he had not yet found a term for it, by far the preponderance of his criticism up to this point had been written in reference to poetry of this type. The sheer brevity and the almost deprecatory tone of his references to poetry of the second voice, on the other hand -- poetry, that is, which is "intended to amuse or to instruct, poetry that tells a story, poetry that preaches or points a moral, or satire which is a form of preaching" (O.P.P., p. 104) -- would seem to suggest that what Eliot is doing here is merely recording his awareness that such poetry exists, not putting it forward as a viable alternative to poetry of the first voice. Yet, the very fact that Eliot should bother to engage in a

discussion of the different poetic voices at all, would seem to indicate that he was becoming more flexible in his attitude towards poetry, that he was beginning to realize -- as indeed he points out in concluding the essay -- that while poetry of the first voice is the only type of poetry which fully conforms to the aesthetic doctrine that art should be valued for its own sake, it is sometimes necessary, particularly in longer works, that other kinds of poetry of a more didactic nature may occasionally be required to supplement it. While a good case could be -- and in the next chapter, will be -- made for the notion that such a modified approach to poetry is reflected in his own later practice, it is also true that in most of his subsequent criticism, he continued to concentrate on what had always been his main interest: the non-didactic poetry of the first voice.

In addition to giving pleasure and to providing some sort of incidental moral edification, poetry, according to Eliot, has still another important function and one which does not violate the basic aesthetic doctrine of the integrity of art: an obligation to develop the language and refine the sensibility of a people. This idea that it is the task of poetry to expand the language by finding new modes of expression for feelings that were hitherto ineffable makes its way into Eliot's criticism relatively early. In an article which appeared in the Criterion in 1932, for example, he speaks of the labour of the artist in "developing human sensibility, . . . in inventing new forms of expression and critical views of life and society."[10] The idea is expanded upon the

following year in The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism where Eliot comments upon how poetry "may effect revolutions in sensibility such as are periodically needed; may help to break up the conventional modes of perception and valuation which are perpetually forming, and make people see the world afresh" (U.P.U.C., p. 155). But the most thorough treatment of this idea, an idea that is present in some form in nearly all of Eliot's later criticism, is "The Social Function of Poetry" where he points out that the direct duty of the poet

> is to his language, first to preserve, and second to extend and improve. In expressing what other people feel he is also changing the feeling by making it more conscious; he is making people more aware of what they feel already, and therefore teaching them something about themselves (O.P.P., p. 9).

In his repeated insistence, then, that the first aim of poetry is to give pleasure by offering unique emotional experiences, and after that to refine the language and sensibility of a people, Eliot is adhering very closely to the tradition of aestheticism in that he is not asking poetry to do anything that could reasonably be done by some other discipline. Where he departs most widely from this tradition is in his recognition that poetry does not exist in a vacuum, that it is related to all other activities in life, and that, therefore, while its primary function must always be its value as an aesthetic object capable of giving pleasure, it may perform various other social or moral functions, even though these must never be part of the poet's conscious intention.

The Nature of Poetry

It is only to be expected that Eliot's modified aesthetic stance regarding the separate-but-relatedness of poetry which we have already examined in relation to his concept of the function of poetry, would also be reflected in his ideas on the nature of poetry. More specifically, his tendency to regard art as something less well circumscribed than had the aesthetes meant that, compared to them, he favored a return to what was defined in the first chapter as a more objective type of poetry in which content would play as important a role as form. However, in order to understand the extent to which Eliot's concept of poetry represents not a complete rejection but a modification of the highly subjective approach taken by the aesthetes, it is necessary to examine briefly the radical change in philosophic thought that had taken place since the doctrine of art for art's sake had first gained popularity.

In Chapter One, we saw how the aesthetic movement with its preference for a subjective type of poetry, for a poetry devoted to the evocation of intense states of feeling, was related to the gradual rise in the nineteenth century of idealistic philosophy and its fundamental assertion that reality or knowledge inheres only in the mind. It was pointed out, too, that the idealists arrived at this position by demonstrating that the subject-object dualism upon which the empiricists had based their entire theory of knowledge -- the idea that there is a mind which knows and an independent object which is known -- is indefensible; that from a

strictly logical point of view it is impossible to "know" an object since all we can ever really have is a mental idea or representation of that object. It soon became apparent, however, that this idealist concept of knowledge was not without its own problems, that in taking the position that reality is nothing more than a projection of the mind, the idealists had inadvertently laid themselves open to the charge of solipsism.

As a way out of this dilemma, later philosophers like Hegel and especially F.H. Bradley (upon whose theory of knowledge Eliot wrote a doctoral dissertation) developed the notion that reality is not something static as the empiricists and idealists had argued, but dynamic and progressive; that subject and object, knower and known are not independent and absolute entities, but that they are really two sides of one relationship, one experiential whole. Now according to Bradley, the only time that an individual comes fully into contact with this experiential whole which alone constitutes reality, is during a pre-conscious condition -- a condition prior to the emergence of the self-object distinction -- which he calls immediate experience. Though the condition of immediate experience is usually associated with infancy, Bradley argues that it is recovered, however fleetingly, throughout later life whenever a person becomes so totally absorbed in an object of contemplation that he forgets his status as an observer and literally becomes one with the object. Eliot himself precisely captured the nature of this idea years later in the Quartets when he wrote of "music heard so deeply/That it is not heard at all, but you are the music/While

the music lasts."[11]

With the inevitable advance of self-consciousness, however, the undifferentiated world of immediate experience falls apart and the individual begins to experience himself as a conscious self in a world of independent objects. What is essential to realize, however -- and it is here that Bradley departs from both the empiricists (for whom objects alone were real) and the idealists (for whom only the self was real) -- is that neither the self nor the world of objects that is experienced as a result of this dissociation can be regarded as real, since both are constructions out of immediate experience, abstractions from it. The self and its objects, in other words, are regarded by Bradley as parts of a world of interrelations constructed by the conscious mind in an effort to impose order upon its experience; but the fact that such a world is obviously a product of thought rather than of immediate experience means that it belongs to the realm of appearance or ideality, not to reality.

Now according to Bradley, knowledge or truth, if it is indeed to be a genuine account of reality, must satisfy two conditions (or criteria of truth as he preferred to call them): first of all it must be comprehensive and self-consistent; and secondly, it must have a purely felt quality, a sense of immediacy. Looked at in this way, it becomes apparent at once that, by itself, the world of immediate experience cannot satisfy this definition of knowledge for while it certainly has immediacy, it lacks consistency, yielding, without the exercise of reflection, only a series of isolated

moments with "no before or after." On the other hand, the world of relations that is constructed by the conscious mind after the moment of immediate experience has passed away cannot qualify as knowledge either, for while it has self-consistency and comprehensiveness, it lacks the immediacy of pure sensation. The solution to this problem according to Bradley (and with this Eliot is in complete accord) is to realize that true knowledge must partake of both these worlds, of both sensation and thought, simultaneously. Accordingly, he argues that what is required in order for knowledge to exist is a reconciliation of these two worlds, a reconciliation which requires that the individual be constantly passing from the two discordant points of view of reality as seen from the objective side of immediate experience and the subjective side of consciousness to a third and higher point of view which includes and transmutes the earlier ones. While this process of uniting the subject and object sides of experience to form an integrated world is a life-time struggle, Eliot, following Bradley, argues that hypothetically its goal would be an "all-inclusive experience outside of which nothing shall fall" which Bradley calls the Absolute.[12] This, of course, is a vastly simplified account of an extremely complex philosophic system: what is essential to realize, however, is that Bradley's theory of knowledge provided a way out of the impasse to which idealism had been brought, by demonstrating that the self is no more real than its objects; both are mere abstractions from the experiential whole which alone constitutes reality.

While it is clear from Eliot's dissertation that he was

fundamentally in accord with Bradley's dynamic concept of knowledge, it is only recently that such critics as Anne Bolgan and Lewis Freed have begun to examine the extent to which these philosophic ideas continued to influence his literary theory long after his formal study in philosophy had been concluded. Although a detailed examination of this relationship is clearly beyond the scope of this study, what is important for our purposes is simply an awareness of the fact that Bradley's solution to the problem of solipsism played an important role in Eliot's attempt to devise a new literary theory that would help counter the trend of the aesthetic movement towards what he felt to be too subjective an approach to poetry. The best place to begin an examination of the theory that he developed, then, is clearly with a brief account of what he had to say about the problem of subjectivity in nineteenth century poetry.

That Eliot was bothered by the excessive subjectivity of late nineteenth century poetry, poetry in which the world often seemed to be nothing more than a projection of the poet's own mind, is evident from the frequency with which he attacked the aesthetes for being so self-absorbed and for trying to live in a dream world. In an early article in the Egoist, for example, he blames Conrad Aiken's failure as a poet on his inability to "escape the fatal American introspectiveness" and on the fact that he was "oversensitive and worried . . . tangled in himself."[13] The tendency to withdraw into a private dream world is criticized even more severely in Eliot's commentary on the career of George Wyndham:

> Wyndham was a Romantic; the only cure for Romanticism is to analyse it. What is permanent and good in Romanticism is curiosity . . . a curiosity which recognizes that any life, if accurately and profoundly penetrated, is interesting and always strange. Romanticism is a short cut to the strangeness without the reality, and it leads its disciples only back upon themselves. George Wyndham had curiosity, but he employed it romantically, not to penetrate the real world, but to complete the varied features of the world he made for himself (S.W., p. 31-32).

Eliot also attributes the vagueness of Swinburne's poetry to the same cause, to the fact that for him "the object has ceased to exist" and instead "language has adapted itself to an independent life of atmospheric nourishment" (S.W., p. 149). Similarly, in "Andrew Marvell," the relative inferiority of the poetry of William Morris to that of Marvell is blamed on the "effort to construct a dream world, which alters English poetry so greatly in the nineteenth century" (S.E., p. 301). A final example of a poet whose work, in Eliot's estimation, reflects the debilitating egoism of its author is Lord Byron of whom he remarks that "to a man so occupied with himself and with the figure he was cutting nothing outside could be altogether real" (O.P.P., p. 226).

Although Eliot's concern with the problem of subjectivity in poetry was directed mainly at the English aesthetic tradition, it is clear from his remarks in "From Poe to Valéry" that he regarded what he defines there as the extreme "self-consciousness" of French writers to be a manifestation of the same problem. By self-consciousness, Eliot seems to have meant, first of all, a preoccupation (similar to that of the English), with subjective

ideas, impressions and feelings rather than with real objects as the material for art. This kind of self-consciousness, he argues, is epitomized by Valéry's remark (which he quotes) to the effect that "the most authentic philosophy is not in the objects of reflection, so much as in the very act of thought and its manipulation."[14] But even more importantly, by self-consciousness, Eliot meant a fascination with the process of writing itself, with the notion, which he sees to have been taken to an extreme by Valéry, that "the composition of a poem should be as conscious and deliberate as possible, that the poet should observe himself in the act of composition" (T.C.C., p. 40). Eliot's comment on this kind of extreme self-consciousness, a comment that could sum up equally well his attitude towards the subjectivity of the English tradition, is very significant:

> this advance of self-consciousness, the extreme awareness of and concern for language which we find in Valéry, is something which must ultimately break down, owing to an increasing strain against which the human mind and nerves will rebel (T.C.C., p. 42).

It is time now to return to the main issue, to the way that Eliot used Bradley's concept of reality as experience itself, in order to develop a new theory of poetry that would help to counter what he felt to be the excessive subjectivity of late nineteenth century verse. Simply stated, the way in which Eliot made use of Bradley's ideas in his literary criticism was by suggesting that poetry is an attempt to capture in language the integrated but partial world of reality that is constantly forming, according to Bradley, as the individual strives to reconcile the discordant

subjective and objective sides of his experience. Art, in other words, is for Eliot an expression of what he calls the "unified sensibility," a new and unique world that is created through the welding together of the abstract world of thought and the concrete world of immediate sensation. Considered, then, in terms of the distinction set up in Chapter One between objective or realistic poetry on the one hand and subjective or so-called pure poetry on the other, Eliot's concept of poetry, with its emphasis on the fusion of thought and sensation, would seem to fall precisely midway between these two extremes. That is, while acknowledging that poetry must have the experiential immediacy of real life, it takes into account at the same time the fact that, in order to be intelligible at all, such raw experience would have to be organized by a process of conscious reflection. The result is a unique and to some extent an artificial world, a world which, while fundamentally distinct from life on the one hand and from the realm of abstract thought or philosophy on the other, is nevertheless related to both. In short, what we have here in this concept of art as a new and integrated world reconciling two discordant aspects of experience, is an explanation, in philosophic terms, of the basic theme we have encountered all along: Eliot's adherence to the modified aesthetic doctrine of the separate-but-relatedness of poetry. And if, in practical terms, Eliot's concept of poetry would seem to recall the romantic notion of art as an organic unity sustained above the level of reality by the imagination -- an idea which, as we have seen, was probably at the root of the aesthetic

doctrine of the integrity of poetry -- it should be remembered that his ideas about art spring from an entirely different philosophic source, a philosophy which places an equal emphasis on the subjective and objective aspects of experience and in which, therefore, the imagination would, like the concepts of self and object, be regarded as a mere abstraction from experience belonging to the realm of appearance, not reality.

That Eliot indeed thought of poetry as having an independent existence different from either ordinary life or abstract thought but incorporating the features of both, is apparent from the frequency with which he describes the way in which poetry should constitute a "world" which has at once the concreteness of immediate sensation and the order or logic of the conscious mind. Almost invariably, however, Eliot goes on to describe this world as a manifestation of the author's unique "point of view," a description which is particularly significant, for it emphasizes what is really the central idea in Bradley's philosophy: the notion that the point of view which a person manages to construct out of his experience is the world; that for an individual no other world is possible than the one that is constantly coming into being through the reconciliation of the objective and subjective sides of his experience. One of the earliest expressions of this idea that art constitutes a unique and integral world is Eliot's observation in "The Possibility of a Poetic Drama" that what is essential in creating a drama

> is to get upon the stage this precise statement of life which is at the same time a point of view, a world -- a world which the author's mind has subjected to a complete process of simplification (S.W., p. 68).

Similarly, he admires the plays of Jonson, despite their superficiality, for precisely the same reason: that they have this kind of internal order and consistency which does not depend on anything external for its meaning:

> We cannot call a man's work superficial when it is the creation of a world; a man cannot be accused of dealing superficially with the world which he himself has created; the superficies is the world. Jonson's characters conform to the logic of the emotions of their world . . . and this logic illuminates the external world, because it gives us a new point of view from which to inspect it (S.W., pp. 116-117).

Even Swinburne, who, in other ways, fares badly in Eliot's criticism, is admired because his "world . . . does not depend upon some other world which it simulates; it has the necessary completeness and self-sufficiency for justification and permanence" (S.W., p. 149). Similarly, in "London Letter," after emphasizing that "art has to create a new world, and a new world must have a new structure," Eliot goes on to admire Joyce precisely because he has "made [his] feelings into an articulate external world."[15] A final example of Eliot's insistence on the integrity of art is his definition of poetry in the 1928 "Preface" to the Sacred Wood where, instead of talking about how a poem should constitute a world, he now suggests that a poem must have a "life" of its own:

> We can only say that a poem, in some sense, has its own life; that its parts form something quite different from a body of neatly ordered biographical data; that the feeling, or emotion, or vision,

> resulting from the poem is something different from the feeling or emotion or vision in the mind of the poet (S.W., p. x).

Closely related to this notion that a poem should have its own life, that it should express the poet's unique world, is an idea that was touched on in an earlier connection, namely that a poem should express a unique "artistic emotion," an emotion arising out of the organization of the work itself and not out of any of the purely personal feelings which may have gone into its composition. The concept of artistic emotion is explained fully in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" where, in reference to a passage he had quoted earlier, he observes that

> the whole effect, the dominant tone, is due to the fact that a number of floating feelings, having an affinity to this emotion [the emotion inherent in the situation] by no means superficially evident, have combined with it to give us a new art emotion (S.W., p. 57).

Similarly, in an early article in the Egoist, he admires the French poet, M. de Bosschère, for his "obstinate refusal to adulterate his poetic emotions with human emotions. Instead of refining ordinary human emotion . . . he aims directly at emotions of art."[16] Though in later years Eliot tended to place an increasing emphasis on the quality of the original emotions which are eventually synthesized into the new art emotion, he never abandoned the notion that a new emotion will be produced. The fullest expression of his modified concept of artistic emotion occurs in The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism where he describes how in Shakespeare's plays

> we must consider not only the degree of unification of all the elements into a 'unity of sentiment,' but the quality and kind of the emotions to be unified, and the elaborateness of the pattern of unification. (U.P.U.C., p. 44)

While Eliot's concept of the integrity of art does not differ in practical terms from that expressed by his aesthetic predecessors -- like them, he insists that art be treated as an independent discipline and not as a mere adjunct to some other area of study -- what is significant about his version is the extent to which it allows him to explain, in theoretical terms, why it is so essential that the sanctity of art not be violated. His reasoning is briefly as follows: art is an expression of the unified sensibility, of the knowledge of reality that is progressively generated as the individual passes back and forth from the objective point of view of immediate experience to the subjective view of consciousness. Therefore, it follows that any literature which fails to express the unified sensibility -- philosophic poetry, for example, which is valued mainly for its ideas and which as a result fails to express the objective side of immediate experience, or realistic novels which merely mimic life without attempting to impose any credible order upon experience -- is not, in the strict sense in which Eliot is using the word, art at all but some other thing like philosophy or journalism. And indeed, a survey of Eliot's criticism, both early and late, reveals that the single most important criterion by which he measures the achievement of an author, is the extent to which his works express a unified sensibility, a welding together of thought and feeling.

By far the preponderance of Eliot's remarks on this subject is devoted to tracing what he feels to be the progressive dissociation of sensibility that has afflicted English poets of the last three centuries and to exploring the symptoms of that dissociation. In an early article in the Egoist, for example, he explains how a failure to achieve a unified sensibility can manifest itself in two ways depending on whether the poet has developed the objective side of his experience at the expense of the subjective or by upsetting the balance in the opposite direction:

> A poet of morbidly keen sensibilities but weak will might become absorbed in the hair [i.e. the object in the example which he is discussing] to the exclusion of the original association which made it significant; a poet of imaginative or reflective power more than emotional power would endow the hair with a ghostly or moralistic meaning.[17]

Similarly, in a brief tribute to Henry James, Eliot attributes the failure of much contemporary British poetry to the same reason, to the fact that

> [i]n England ideas run wild and pasture on the emotions; instead of thinking with our feelings (a very different thing) we corrupt our feelings with ideas; we produce the public, the political, the emotional idea, evading sensation and thought.[18]

Furthermore, in almost every case in which Eliot censures the works of a particular author, the reason given is that the poet in question has failed to achieve a unified sensibility. Thus we hear, for example, that "George Meredith . . . was fertile in ideas; his epigrams are a facile substitute for observation and inference"[19]; that "Massinger's feeling for language had outstripped his feeling for things; that his eye and his vocabulary were not in

co-operation" (S.W., p. 128); that Swinburne writes in a way that suggests that "[i]t is . . . the word that gives him the thrill, not the object" (S.W., p. 148); that "Blake did not see enough, became too much occupied with ideas" (S.W., p. 156); and that Shelley "keeps his images on one side and his meanings on the other."[20]

At the same time, Eliot expresses almost unbounded admiration for poets who have managed to express a unified sensibility, who -- to borrow his famous phrase -- have managed to embody their feelings in an "objective correlative." Although he only actually used this expression on one occasion, the idea which it summarizes -- the notion that without concrete embodiment no emotion or idea, however powerful, can be expressed in poetry -- is present in some form or other in virtually everything he wrote. His insistence that the "only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an 'objective correlative' (S.W., p. 100) is, of course, perfectly explicable in terms of Bradley's notion that, unless they are attached to some specific object or event, emotions have no reality since they express the subjective side of experience only. Just two examples of the importance Eliot placed on finding a concrete embodiment for thoughts and feelings are his observation in "The Possibility of a Poetic Drama" that "[p]ermanent literature is always a presentation: either a presentation of thought or a presentation of feeling by a statement of events in human action or objects in the external world" (S.W., pp. 64-65); and his reflection in "Poetry and Propaganda" that poetry is "the creation

of a sensuous embodiment. It is the making the Word Flesh."[21]

Of all the poets about whom Eliot wrote over the years, it is, of course, Dante who, in his estimation, came closer than anyone else to effecting this kind of perfect synthesis between thought and feeling in his art. In the first essay on Dante, for example, Eliot writes of the Divine Comedy that "[w]e are not here studying the philosophy, we see it, as part of the ordered world" (S.W., p. 170); and in the second that "[n]owhere in poetry has experience so remote from ordinary experience been expressed so concretely" (S.E., p. 267). Almost as enthusiastic is his praise for the metaphysical poets -- poets like Chapman, Middleton, Webster, Tourneur, and Donne -- who together, he tells us, represent a period in literature "when the intellect was immediately at the tips of the senses. Sensation became word and word was sensation" (S.W., p. 129). Still another writer whom Eliot admired for the same reason, for the way that his "intellect and sensibility were in harmony," is the seventeenth century Anglican bishop, Lancelot Andrewes. Indeed, Eliot's description of the way Andrewes set about to compose a sermon allowing his emotion to grow directly out of the object he was contemplating, constitutes one of the clearest accounts in Eliot's prose of the way in which the subjective and objective aspects of experience could come together in art:

> When Andrewes begins his sermon, from beginning to end you are sure that he is wholly in his subject, unaware of anything else, that his emotion grows as he penetrates more deeply into

> his subject, that he is finally 'alone with the Alone,' with the mystery which he is seeking to grasp more and more firmly. . . . Andrewes's emotion is purely contemplative; it is not personal, it is wholly evoked by the object of contemplation, to which it is adequate; his emotions wholly contained in and explained by its object. (S.E., p. 351).

The same ability to express a unified sensibility is also behind Eliot's admiration for such other figures as Sir John Davies who, he says, "had that strange gift, so rarely bestowed, for turning thought into feeling" (O.P.P., p. 153), and for Bradley in whose prose "acute intellect and passionate feeling preserve a classic balance."[22]

So far, then, it is clear that by arguing that art should constitute a unique world uniting thought and feeling, Eliot was attempting to move away from the highly subjective approach favored by the aesthetes towards a type of poetry which would occupy a middle position between the extremes of objective or realistic poetry on the hand, and subjective or pure poetry on the other. It should come as no surprise to learn, then, that Eliot took a correspondingly modified position with respect to the issue of form and content in poetry, always insisting (in contrast to the aesthetes who generally valued form above content) that form and content should be of equal importance in a poem. An early statement of his position (which is not unlike that of Swinburne who also favored a balance between form and content) occurs in an essay on Pound in which he declares that "[f]or poetry to approach the condition of music [which would be "pure" form] . . . it is not necessary that poetry should be destitute of meaning" (T.C.C., p. 170). A similar balance between

form and content is advocated in "Four Elizabethan Dramatists" where Eliot argues that while "on the one hand actual life is always the material, . . . on the other hand an abstraction from actual life is a necessary condition to the creation of the work of art" (S.E., p. 111). A final example of Eliot's belief in the equal importance of form and content is his observation in "From Poe to Valéry" that while poetry "may be said to range from that in which the attention of the reader is directed primarily to the sound, to that in which it is directed primarily to the sense" still "with either type, sound and sense must cooperate" (T.C.C., p. 32).

Not only did Eliot insist that form and content are of equal importance in a poem but he also went on to posit between form and content exactly the same kind of dynamic relationship that (according to Bradleyan philosophy) exists in reality between the subjective and objective sides of experience: a dialectic relationship in which each side (by itself a mere abstraction with no absolute existence) modifies and interacts with the other thereby creating an entirely new entity, a poem, in which all previous distinctions are transcended and reconciled. The reason that Eliot should conceive the relationship between form and content to be one of dynamic interaction rather than of simple dualism, becomes apparent when it is realized that he always associated the content of a poem with sensation, with what is felt during the unconscious moments of immediate experience, and form with thought, with the activity of the conscious mind in ordering this material and shaping it into something that can be communicated.[23] Therefore, just as in life,

knowledge or truth is possible only through the collision and subsequent transcendence of the discordant sides of experience, so in art, the creation of a poem depends upon the continual modification of form by content and content by form. One of Eliot's earliest expressions of this idea occurs in "The Possibility of a Poetic Drama" where he observes that "[t]o create a form is not merely to invent a shape, a rhyme or rhythm. It is also the realization of the whole appropriate content of this rhyme or rhythm" (S.W., p. 63). The way that, in his view, form and content interact to define each other is even more clearly delineated in his "Introduction" to Ezra Pound: Selected Poems where he writes that "[i]n the perfect poem they [i.e. form and content] fit and are the same thing; and in another sense they always are the same thing. So it is always true to say that form and content are the same thing, and always true to say that they are different things."[24] Eliot's most thorough treatment of the dialectic nature of the relationship between form and content, however -- the fact that it makes no sense to talk about either term in isolation -- is his discussion of poetry of the first voice in "The Three Voices of Poetry":

> It is misleading . . . to speak of the material as creating or imposing its own form: what happens is a simultaneous development of form and material; for the form affects the material at every stage; and perhaps all the material does is to repeat 'not that!' in the face of each unsuccessful attempt at formal organization; and finally the material is identified with its form. (O.P.P., p. 110)

Having established the fact that, in Eliot's view, the relationship between form and content is a dialectic one and that

therefore it makes little sense to talk about either term in isolation, it is nevertheless necessary, for the purposes of demonstrating the relationship between content and immediate experience on the one hand, and form and thought on the other, that the two terms be discussed individually. The connection between content and immediate experience in Eliot's criticism is evident from the way that he almost invariably refers to the matter of a poem before it has been subjected to the structuring influence of form, as something nebulous, incoherent, undefinable -- something, in short, which partakes of all the features of the preconscious state of immediate experience. This association of content with immediate experience should, of course, come as no surprise for it is merely another way of asserting a theme which runs throughout Eliot's criticism: the idea that to qualify as art at all, poetry must be constantly breaking new ground, trying to put into words the as yet ineffable feelings and sensations that are aroused as each new generation experiences various objects, ideas, and events that were not available to their predecessors. An early instance of the way in which Eliot associates content with the indefiniteness of the state of immediate experience is his reference in "Ezra Pound: His Metric and Poetry" to the material of a sonnet as "the block of stuff which can perfectly be modelled into the sonnet" (T.C.C., p. 167). That he believed the content of poetry to have its origin in sensation, in the state of immediate experience, is apparent, too, from his observation in "Philip Massinger" that "a style should follow the involutions of a mode of perceiving, registering,

and digesting impressions" (S.W., p. 131). The most thorough exploration of this relationship between the material of a poem and the state of immediate experience, however, occurs in "The Three Voices of Poetry" where he locates the origin of a poem in the "pressure of some rude unknown psychic material" (O.P.P., p. 111).

Eliot is equally consistent, on the other hand, in associating the form of a poem with the conscious mind, with the activity of thought in choosing some specific rhythm, structural device or philosophic system that would reduce and organize the nebulous mass of psychic material into a shape capable of being communicated. In contrast, then, to his references to the nebulous and uncontrollable nature of content, whenever he talks about form it is as something deliberate, restrained and precise -- something, in short, which is clearly a product of conscious thought rather than feeling and sensation. Furthermore, it should be noted that in most of his discussions of form he tends to advocate the use, wherever possible, of some recognizable convention, some arbitrary limitation, that would make the poet's task of organizing his materials somewhat easier. To understand Eliot's insistence on the importance of choosing a convention, it is necessary to recur once more to Bradley's theory of knowledge, to the idea that there is no single external world, only the many private worlds or points of view which are constructed as each individual struggles to make sense of his immediate experience. It follows, then, that the only way of establishing some sort of communication between these individual worlds, is to agree upon an arbitrary convention which,

though inevitably an abstraction and therefore not a true expression of reality, will at least have the virtue of providing a central point upon which all individual points of view can converge. Eliot's concept of form as something deliberate and restraining, something which limits individual expression but which is necessary if there is to be any communication at all, is first explained in detail in "Reflections on Vers Libre" where he points out that "freedom is only truly freedom when it appears against the background of an artificial limitation" (T.C.C., p. 187). The same idea -- the need for some deliberate and conventional structuring device -- is also at the bottom of Eliot's criticism of Blake who, he argues, was "inclined to formlessness" because his genius lacked "a framework of accepted and traditional ideas" (S.W., p. 157-58). Just how wide an interpretation Eliot gave to this idea of conventions, the fact that he was not simply advocating a wholesale return to some worn out literary technique, is evident from his more complete definition of a convention in "Four Elizabethan Dramatists":

> When I say convention, I do not necessarily mean any particular convention of subject matter, of treatment, of verse or of dramatic form, of general philosophy of life or any other convention which has already been used. It may be some quite new selection or structure or distortion in subject matter or technique; any form or rhythm imposed upon the world of action (S.E., p. 112).

A final point to be made about Eliot's concept of the nature of poetry, his insistence that a poem should constitute an independent world where thought and sensation, subject and object, form and content are perfectly welded together, is that it is only

a description of the ideal poem. In actual practice, of course, Eliot realized that much valuable poetry is written in which the balance has been tilted (though never too far) in one direction or the other, either towards a more subjective approach and an emphasis on form and technique, or towards a more objective approach and an emphasis on content. This flexibility in his attitude towards poetry is well illustrated by his observation in "Introduction" to Ezra Pound: Selected Poems that the reason we "appreciate both poetry in which technical excellence surpasses interest of content, and poetry in which interest of content surpasses technique" is so that "we shall be able to appreciate the meeting of the peaks, the fusion of matter and means, form and content, on any level."[25] An even further departure from the balanced approach of the so-called ideal poem is his introduction, in "The Three Voices of Poetry," of the concept of poetry of the "second voice" -- poetry, that is, in which the poet engages in story-telling, moralizing, or satire and in which the focus is almost entirely on the material. And while Eliot never abandoned his belief that form and content must cooperate in a good poem, it is true that in his later writings he demonstrated an increasing preoccupation with the content of poetry, with the kinds and quality of ideas that he regarded as suitable for the production of good poetry. Taken as a whole, then, it is probably fair to say that, if the principal focus of Eliot's early criticism was an attempt to restore the balance which, in his view, the aesthetes had upset in the direction of subjectivity, the overall effect of his later prose was

to tip the balance, if ever so slightly, in the opposite direction by concentrating somewhat more on the material that went into a poem.

The Role of the Poet

It is only to be expected that Eliot's modified version of aesthetic theory regarding the nature of poetry, his belief that ideally, poetry should strive to take into account not only the subjective but the objective side of experience as well, would also affect his conception of the role of the poet. Generally speaking, what differentiates Eliot's concept of the role of the poet from that of the aesthetes is the significantly different interpretation that he gives to the place of personality in poetry. At the same time, however, in his willingness to recognize both deliberate craftsmanship and unconscious inspiration as legitimate aspects of the creative process, Eliot is quite within the aesthetic tradition and remarkably close to the position of Pater. A closer examination of Eliot's views on these two issues -- the place of personality and the relative importance of craftsmanship and inspiration in the production of poetry -- will establish the extent to which Eliot was both indebted to and in reaction against, his aesthetic predecessors.

It will be remembered that what the aesthetes, with their highly subjective approach to poetry, meant by personality or temperament, was the poet's ability to impose himself upon the external world, refashioning it in accordance with his own inner

vision or state of mind. In such an approach as this, clearly the important question in determining the success or failure of a poem would be whether or not the poet had an interesting personality, whether or not he was endowed with some special way of seeing the world that would distinguish his poetry from that of everyone else. Now despite the popular assumption that Eliot was committed in every way to an impersonal theory of poetry, it is nevertheless true that in his approach to particular authors he frequently took what, at least on the surface, would appear to be a position very similar to that of the aesthetes: that a good poem will express the unique vision of a powerful and complex personality. He observes, for example, that "Shakespeare's [characters] represent a more complex tissue of feelings and desires, as well as a more supple, a more susceptible temperament [i.e. than Jonson's]" (S.W., p. 119); that "Massinger had not the personality to create great farce" (S.W., p. 142); that "the whole personality of Whibley is present in whatever he wrote, and it is the unity of a personality which gives an indissoluble unity to his variety of subject" (S.E., p. 500); and that in the plays of Marston, "we have to do with a positive, powerful and unique personality" (S.E., p. 229). In order to understand how Eliot's notion of the role of personality in poetry differs from that of the aesthetes, it is necessary to refer once more to Bradley's theory of knowledge and his concept of "point of view."

We have already seen that, largely owing to his reading of Bradley, Eliot had come to regard poetry as an expression of the

unified sensibility, as an attempt to capture in words the awareness of reality that is progressively generated in the struggle of the poet to reconcile and transcend the discordant subjective and objective sides of his experience. Furthermore, we have seen that this awareness of reality, this unique point of view is, for that poet, the world; he can know nothing that has not been grounded in his immediate experience. The point still to be made, however, is that when Eliot argues that poetry should express personality, he simply means that the poet should attempt to express the unique point of view, the unique world, that he has constructed out of his experience. That an ability on the part of the poet to convey his unique apprehension of reality is indeed what Eliot meant by personality in art, is apparent from the frequency with which he stresses that, taken together, the works of a particular writer should not only constitute a "world" or a "point of view" (as was mentioned earlier) but that this should be a personal world giving the distinct sense of having emanated from the mind of an interesting and unique individual. Thus Eliot admires Marlowe and Jonson, for example, because their "comedies were a view of life; they were, as great literature is, the transformation of a personality into a personal work of art" (S.W., p. 139). Similarly, Shakespeare and Jonson are cited with approval because they "each had in the end a personal point of view which can be called neither comic nor tragic" (S.E., p. 162). On the other hand, it is precisely because Browning lacked this kind of personal and consistent view of life that Eliot ranks his poetry below that of

Shakespeare:

> Shakespeare, one feels, arrives at an objective world by a process from himself, whoever he was, as the centre and starting point; but too often, one thinks with Browning, here is a world with no particular interesting man inside it, no consistent point of view.[26]

From what has been said so far, it would seem that Eliot's concept of the proper function of personality in poetry -- the idea that a poet should express his personal apprehension of reality, his world -- is not really all that different from the aesthetic notion that a poet should remake the external world in accordance with his own inner vision. What is absolutely essential to observe, however, is that for Eliot, this personal point of view draws upon both the subjective world of thought and the objective world of sensation, and can therefore be regarded as a genuine, though limited, expression of reality itself. For the aesthetes, on the other hand, the world that is embodied in a poem is merely a projection onto external objects of some mood or personal feeling existing in the poet's mind, and, as a result, is expressive of the subjective side of experience only. A survey of the negative references to personality in Eliot's criticism reveals that in virtually every case what is being objected to is personality in this bad sense of a poet who is so wrapped up in himself, so preoccupied with his own feelings, ideas, or moods, that he has completely failed to penetrate the external world. The result is that he is either unable to communicate at all (since his feelings cannot be objectified), or else if he does manage to say something it will only be to assert all the "trifling differences which are

his distinction" (S.E., p. 24). It is precisely personality, in this bad sense, for example, upon which Eliot blames the failure of Hamlet, a play, he argues, which is "full of some stuff that the writer could not drag to light, contemplate or manipulate into art" (S.W., p. 100). That the kind of personality he objected to in art was a failure on the part of the poet to express more than the subjective, the idiosyncratic side of his experience, becomes even clearer in his observation in "Thomas Heywood" that "[i]n the work of nearly all of those of his [Heywood's] contemporaries who are as well known as he there is at least some inchoate pattern; there is, as it would often be called, personality" (S.E., p. 175). In Baudelaire, on the other hand, he finds an example of a writer who was sufficiently willing to look outside of himself that he managed, at least partially, to transmute his subjective personality into the larger objective view of life which, in Eliot's view, is essential for the production of art:

> I cannot assert it too strongly -- Baudelaire's view of life, such as it is, is objectively apprehensible, that is to say, his idiosyncrasies can partly explain his view of life, but they cannot explain it away (S.E., p. 430).

However, even if a poet has managed to transform his merely personal feelings into a larger and objective view of life, this in itself, Eliot argues, is still no guarantee that he will be a successful artist. What is even more essential is that this view be a sufficiently profound and comprehensive one. And the only way, in turn, of ensuring that it is, according to Eliot, is for the poet to immerse himself thoroughly in tradition. The reason that Eliot

places such an emphasis on tradition must be sought once again in Bradleyan philosophy, in the notion that knowledge or truth is generated only by the constant collision and subsequent transcendence of discordant points of view. It follows then, that tradition, because it offers a virtually inexhaustible supply of new and different points of view from which to inspect reality, affords the poet an excellent opportunity for expanding his view of life, not by causing him to forget his personal experiences, but by enabling him to separate the merely local and transient in those experiences from what is universal and permanent. It is precisely this capacity of tradition for enlarging an artist's point of view, for "superpersonalizing" him, for example, which is being alluded to in Eliot's discussion of the "creative eye" in "Euripides and Professor Murray": "We need an eye which can see the past in its place with its definite differences from the present, and yet so lively that it shall be as present to us as the present" (S.W., p. 77). The same notion that a thorough immersion in tradition will enlarge a poet's outlook, enabling him not so much to suppress his personal experience as to transmute it into "something rich and strange,"[27] is expressed even more clearly in "The Function of Criticism":

> There is accordingly something [i.e. tradition] outside of the artist to which he owes allegiance, a devotion to which he must surrender and sacrifice himself in order to earn and to obtain his unique position (S.E., p. 24).

Eliot's concept of the place of personality in art -- his notion that a poet must express the "world" he has constructed out

of his immediate experience, a world that should be as complex and comprehensive as possible -- has, of course, a direct bearing on what he has to say about the second issue concerning the function of the poet: that of the relative importance of unconscious inspiration and deliberate craftsmanship in the production of art. As would be expected, Eliot's repeated insistence that the poet's world should be an expression of both the subjective and objective sides of experience, meant that he tended to place an equal emphasis on inspiration and craftsmanship in the creative process.

Eliot's considerable interest in the role of unconscious inspiration in the production of poetry becomes understandable when it is recalled that he located the source of the material of art in the unconscious state of immediate experience. That this is indeed the case is evident from the frequency with which he refers to the way a poem originates, not as a definite idea or emotion in the poet's mind but as a kind of "obscure impulse" which forces itself upon the poet and over which he has no conscious control.[28] The result, according to Eliot, is that a poem may realize itself as a particular rhythm or intense state of feeling long before it can actually be put into words. Although the importance of the unconscious in the production of poetry is an idea which is developed mainly in Eliot's later criticism, it is nevertheless present, at least in embryo form, almost from the onset. As early as "Tradition and the Individual Talent," for example, Eliot argues that the creative process is "a concentration which does not happen consciously or of deliberation" but is, instead, "a passive

attending upon the event" (S.W., p. 58). Similarly, in The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism, Eliot speculates that in calling the first step in the creative process "invention," Dryden was referring, at least in part, to the "sudden irruption of the germ of a new poem, possibly merely as a state of feeling" (p. 56). However, Eliot's most thorough treatment of the role of the unconscious in the process of composition and one which is couched in language reminiscent of that used decades earlier in his thesis to describe the undifferentiated state of immediate experience, is his discussion of poetry of the first voice in "The Three Voices of Poetry":

> He [i.e. the poet] has something germinating in him for which he must find words; but he cannot know what words he wants until he has found the words; he cannot identify this embryo until it has been transformed into an arrangement of the right words in the right order. . . . What you start from is nothing so definite as an emotion, in any ordinary sense; it is still more certainly not an idea. . . . [The poet] is haunted by a demon, a demon against which he feels powerless, because in its first manifestation it has no face, no name, nothing (O.P.P., pp. 106-107).

Despite his emphasis on the role of unconscious inspiration in the process of poetic creation, Eliot was equally conscious of the extraordinary amount of hard work which is required in order to turn the material divulged during moments of inspiration into poetry. In emphasizing the importance of craftsmanship, Eliot, like Pater, was, of course, reacting against the popular romantic notion, particularly strong in England, that to be good, a poem must necessarily have been written in a fit of inspiration. On the contrary, Eliot always insists that the conscious labour of the poet in editing, arranging and correcting the materials arrived at

unconsciously plays an equal, if not a more important role, than the original inspiration. The indispensability of deliberate craftsmanship in the creative process is clearly recognized in "The Function of Criticism" where, after criticizing Arnold for overlooking "the capital importance of criticism in the work of creation itself," Eliot goes on to point out that "[p]robably, indeed, the larger part of the labour of an author in composing his work is critical labour; the labour of sifting, combining, constructing, expunging, correcting, testing: this frightful toil is as much critical as creative" (S.E., p. 30). That Eliot's position regarding the importance of both craftsmanship and inspiration in poetic composition remained virtually unchanged throughout his career, is evident from his observation in "Introduction" to Valéry's Art of Poetry that "a most wholesome reminder to the young poet" is Valéry's "insistence . . . upon the small part played, in the elaboration of a poem, by what he calls le rêve -- what is ordinarily called the 'inspiration' -- and upon the subsequent process of deliberate, conscious, arduous labour."[29]

A final matter that must be taken into consideration in discussing the role of the poet is the long and ongoing debate in Eliot's criticism over the question of poetry and belief: the question, that is, of the extent to which a poet must believe in the religious or philosophic ideas at his disposal in order to turn them into poetry. Speaking generally, Eliot's remarks on this issue over the years reveal that he gradually moved away from the strictly aesthetic stance that the only question that can legitimately be

asked of a poem is how well the poet has realized his ideas (not whether he believes or disbelieves them), towards the modified position that there is at least some relationship between a poet's capacity to believe his ideas and his ability to turn them into art. Viewed in a larger perspective, this, of course, is only one more manifestation of the pattern we have been tracing from the beginning: the way that Eliot gradually came to modify aesthetic doctrine by pointing out that art, though separate from other disciplines, is nevertheless related to them.

It is clear from Eliot's first two attempts to solve this problem that he had still not made up his mind on the issue. In "A Note on Poetry and Belief" written in 1927, for example, he takes the non-aesthetic stance that poetry and belief can never be completely separated. In reply to I.A. Richards' charge that The Waste Land is an example of a poem written with no beliefs, Eliot writes: "I cannot see that poetry can ever be separated from something which I should call belief, and to which I cannot see any reason for refusing the name of belief, unless we are to reshuffle names altogether.[30] Yet in "Shakespeare and the Stoicism of Seneca" written a few months later, he takes the opposite approach, arguing that even though the ideas with which Shakespeare had to work were inferior to those of Dante, the poetry of the two writers was of equal merit because they were equally adept at turning ideas, of whatever quality, into poetry. "I doubt," Eliot writes in summing up,

> whether belief proper enters into the activity of a great poet, qua poet. That is, Dante, qua poet,

> did not believe or disbelieve the Thomist cosmology or theory of the soul: he merely made use of it, or a fusion took place between his initial emotional impulses and a theory, for the purpose of making poetry. The poet makes poetry, the metaphysician makes metaphysics, the bee makes honey, the spider secretes a filament; you can hardly say that any of these agents believes; he merely does. (S.E., p. 138).

With his next attempt to solve the problem in "Dante" (1929), Eliot adopts the kind of modified aesthetic stance that he was to retain, with little variation, till the end: the idea that both the aesthetic theory according to which poetry and belief can be separated completely, and the opposing view that a poet must believe an idea in order to turn it into poetry, become absurd if pushed to their extremes. He concludes with the observation that while "we can distinguish between Dante's beliefs as a man and his beliefs as a poet," "we are forced to believe that there is a particular relation between the two, and that the poet 'means what he says'" (S.E., p. 269). A similar departure from the extreme aesthetic position that poetry can be divorced from all belief is evident in Eliot's admission a year later in "Poetry and Propaganda" that at least "for some kinds of poetry it is necessary that the poet himself should believe the philosophy of which he is making use."[31] In his final effort to deal with this problem, an essay entitled "Goethe as the Sage," Eliot goes one step further and flatly denies any suggestion that it is possible for a poet not to believe a philosophic idea which he is embodying in verse. Such a suggestion, he concludes, would amount to a "justification of insincerity, and would annihilate all poetic values

except those of technical accomplishment" (O.P.P., p. 259). Looked at in its widest perspective, then, this ultimate denial that it is possible to distinguish between the man who creates (the technical craftsman) and the man who believes, is really only a reassertion, with respect to the poet, of what we have seen Eliot insisting upon all along with regard to the poem: that it is impossible to create some pure aesthetic entity which will have its entire effect in isolation from the ideas that went into its composition.

The Purpose of Criticism

Of the four aspects of Eliot's criticism that we have under examination, it is undoubtedly in his concept of the function of criticism that he departs most (though not nearly as radically as is sometimes assumed) from his aesthetic predecessors. Speaking generally, the principal difference between Eliot and the aesthetes is that, whereas the aesthetes had not always bothered to differentiate between such related critical activities as literary history, textual analysis, and biographical research, Eliot took a much more scientific approach, insisting that any writing not based upon an immediate and intense apprehension of the work itself does not qualify, in a strict sense, as literary criticism but as "some other thing." In other words, works focusing on the life of the author or on the historical period in which they were written, however valuable in themselves, would not, for Eliot, constitute true literary criticism. In order to define the realm of literary

criticism more precisely, Eliot set about in his early writings to establish a critical apparatus, almost scientific in its exactitude, that would enable a critic to elicit from any work of literature the maximum aesthetic pleasure it was capable of giving. But just as, in his concept of poetry, he eventually came to see that a purely aesthetic object cannot exist except in relation to the various disciplines from which it draws its materials, so in his approach to criticism he became increasingly aware that pure literary criticism -- criticism, that is, which deals only with the aesthetic question of how well the poet has manipulated his material, not with the materials themselves -- becomes meaningless when it is not supplemented by criticism arising from the various other disciplines upon whose boundaries literature impinges. Before considering Eliot's conception of the way literary criticism is related to the work of other disciplines, however, it is essential that we examine in more detail, exactly what, in his view, distinguishes the task of the literary critic from that of every other writer.

As we have already seen, Eliot always insisted -- and in this respect he is very close to the position not only of Pater but also of Arnold -- that the first task of the literary critic is to focus directly on the object, on the work before him, without the interference of any merely private emotions or extra-literary bias whatsoever. It is this emphasis on seeing the object directly (an emphasis, incidentally, which is one more instance of his preoccupation with the Bradleyan notion that all knowledge is

grounded in immediate experience) that accounts for his repeated insistence that a work of literature should be treated almost as if it were a physical object capable of eliciting intense visual, aural, and above all, emotional responses. In an early article in the Atheneum, for example, he writes that "[t]aste begins and ends in feeling . . . It is an organization of the immediate experiences obtained in literature, which is modified in its shape by the points of concentration of our strongest feelings, the authors who have affected us most strongly and deeply."[32] Similarly, in "The Perfect Critic," his strong disapproval of the "abstract critic" (the sort of critic, that is, who would define poetry as "the most highly organized form of intellectual activity") is based upon the argument that such a critic "was not engaged in perceiving when he composed this definition"; he failed to realize that "[n]ot only all knowledge, but all feeling, is in perception" (S.W., p. 10). That Eliot retained a belief in the primacy of direct perception as a starting point for all literary criticism right till the end, is apparent from his observation in "To Criticize the Critic" that in his own essays the "phrases of generalization . . . are attempts to summarize, in conceptual form, direct and intense experience of the poetry that [he had] found most congenial" (T.C.C., p. 25).

While Eliot always maintained, then, that a direct perception of the object itself is the first step in the criticism of literature, he was equally insistent -- and this again reflects the influence of Pater -- that for these perceptions to be of any use they must be analyzed by the conscious mind and translated into the

intellectual terms of language. And what is emphasized, in particular, is that this transition from mere perception to intellection must take place quickly; that the two phases are not really distinct processes in themselves but (like the two sides of experience in Bradleyan philosophy with which they are associated) merely different aspects of what is essentially one activity. The importance that Eliot placed on this kind of cooperation between thought and feeling is well illustrated by his depiction of Aristotle (whom he calls the "perfect critic") as an example "of intelligence itself swiftly operating the analysis of sensation to the point of principle and definition" (S.W., p. 11). Later in the same essay, the precise nature of this transition from observation to intellectual construction is described in more detail:

> [T]he true generalization is not something superposed upon an accumulation of perceptions; the perceptions do not, in a really appreciative mind, accumulate as a mass, but form themselves as a structure; and criticism is the statement in language of this structure; it is a development of sensibility (S.W., p. 15).

A final example of the way in which, in Eliot's view, immediate perception and intellectual analysis must cooperate in the process of criticism is his observation in The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism that "no theory [about poetry] can amount to much which is not founded upon a direct experience of good poetry; but on the other hand our direct experience of poetry involves a good deal of generalising activity" (U.P.U.C., p. 16).

It should be observed, in this connection, that a great deal of Eliot's rather hostile reaction to aesthetic criticism in general can be traced to this same idea; to the notion that, in his view,

the aesthetes, though endowed with an intense sensibility to literary beauty, were for the most part incapable of translating their impressions into the language of rational discourse. In the case of Swinburne, for example, Eliot argues that while he was exceptionally gifted at forming aesthetic impressions, he tended to "stop thinking" at just the moment when he should have been turning these impressions into analytic statements, with the result that his criticism lacks profundity (S.W., p. 20). Similarly he pokes fun at the members of the Browning Study Circle because, instead of trying to transform their impressions of the poetry into intellectual statements, they remain contented to luxuriate in feeling for its own sake:

> To the member of the Browning Study Circle, the discussion of poets about poetry may seem arid, technical, and limited. It is merely that the practioners have clarified and reduced to a state of fact all the feelings that the member can only enjoy in the most nebulous form; the dry technique implies, for those who have mastered it, all that the member thrills to; only that has been made into something precise, tractable, under control (S.E., pp. 31-32).

However, in addition to insisting in a general way that feeling and intelligence must cooperate in the critical process, Eliot went one step further by proposing two "tools" designed to facilitate the transition from the realm of immediate feeling to that of intellectual comprehension. By "analysis," the first tool, Eliot meant that the kind of penetration of feeling by thought that has been described in general terms, should be used to elucidate the work, either by bringing to light some hitherto unperceived aspect of meaning or by isolating some particular technical feature that

renders the work especially skillful or unusual. With the aid of the second tool, that of comparison, the critic then attempts, by placing the work he is considering alongside similar works of the past, to define what special kind of aesthetic pleasure his work makes available, that is available nowhere else. In order to make these sorts of comparisons, of course, Eliot takes it for granted that the critic will have at his disposal a wide and profound knowledge not only of contemporary literature but of the literature of all times and places. The way in which Eliot conceived that these two tools, comparison and analysis, could function together to disclose the unique merit -- what Pater would have called the "virtue" -- of a particular writer is explained in detail in an early article entitled "Studies in Contemporary Criticism":

> The work of the critic is almost wholly comprehended in the "complementary activities" of comparison and analysis. The one activity implies the other; and together they provide the only way of asserting standards and of isolating a writer's peculiar merits.[33]

Perhaps the most detailed account of the way in which Eliot conceived comparison to be an indispensable tool in helping a critic to isolate the unique merit of a particular author is his discussion of Shakespeare in "Philip Massinger":

> Reading Shakespeare and several of his contemporaries is pleasure enough, perhaps all the pleasure possible, for most. But if we wish to consummate and refine this pleasure by understanding it, to distil the last drop of it, to press and press the essence of each author, to exact measurement to our own sensations, then we must compare (S.W., p. 124).

Having established, then, that the role of the strictly literary critic, in Eliot's conception, is to promote the

appreciation and understanding of literature by transforming intense first-hand impressions of individual works into precise intellectual conclusions, it remains to demonstrate the way in which, in Eliot's view, literary criticism is related, first of all, to the creative process, and secondly to the criticism of the various other disciplines upon whose boundaries literature encroaches. With respect to the relationship between criticism and creation, Eliot always took the position that while criticism is a legitimate -- indeed an essential -- part of the creative process, creation has absolutely no part to play in the operation of criticism. His repeated insistence that creation be banished from the realm of literary criticism, represents, of course, a significant departure from both the theory and the practice of many of the aesthetic critics; and, indeed, his early essay, "The Perfect Critic," reads almost as if it were intended as a direct rebuttal to what is surely the most vocal assertion of the opposite position, Wilde's "The Critic as Artist." In the essay, Eliot argues that the faculties of creation and criticism are entirely distinct; that once having formed impressions of a work of literature, "you react in one of two ways. . . . The moment you try to put the impressions into words, you either begin to analyse and construct, to 'ériger en lois,' or you begin to create something else" (S.W., p. 5). The result of attempting to exercise both faculties simultaneously, on the other hand -- a fault with which Eliot charges such "impressionistic" critics as Symons and Pater -- is the production of something new which is neither criticism nor creation but merely the "satisfaction

of a suppressed creative wish" (S.W., p. 7). The clearest expression of this idea that creation has absolutely no part in the operation of literary criticism, however, is "The Function of Criticism" where Eliot sums up his position as follows:

> If so large a part of creation is really criticism, is not a large part of what is called 'critical writing' really creative? If so, is there not creative criticism in the ordinary sense? The answer seems to be, that there is no equation. I have assumed as axiomatic that a creation, a work of art, is autotelic; and that criticism, by definition, is about something other than itself. Hence you cannot fuse creation with criticism as you can fuse criticism with creation (S.E., pp. 30-31).

While Eliot, then, always remained adamant that the creative faculty has no role whatsoever in the operation of criticism, he did become increasingly aware that if the labour of every other discipline except literature were excluded from the realm of literary criticism, the criticism produced under such conditions would be of very little value indeed. As a result, relatively early in his writings on the subject, he adopted the position that while it is sometimes permissible -- indeed, essential -- for a literary critic to step outside the boundaries of his immediate area of concern (which, of course, is with the aesthetic value of the work itself) by drawing upon the scholarship of some related discipline like history, biography, or philosophy, he should do so only with the full awareness that when making such a digression, he is no longer performing literary criticism but some other thing. And indeed, it is significant in Eliot's own practice that while he began to wander further and further from purely literary topics, venturing, for example, into the fields of politics and sociology, he almost

invariably begins by pointing out that, in making such a divigation, he is no longer concerned with assessing the aesthetic value of the work in question, an assessment that only the literary critic is qualified to make. Just how little Eliot's views on the subject of the relatedness of literary criticism to that of other disciplines changed over the years becomes apparent when two of his comments on this issue -- one made at the beginning of his career, the other near the end -- are placed side by side. In the first, an article entitled "Studies in Contemporary Criticism, II" published in 1918, the emphasis is primarily on the separateness of literature:

> It is desirable that men of letters should be more scholarly, and that scholars should acquire more lively literary perceptions; but it is also desirable that the work of scholarship and literature should be distinct.[34]

In the second, the retrospective essay, "To Criticize the Critic," written nearly fifty years later, the emphasis has now shifted to the way in which literary criticism must be supplemented by the criticism arising out of other disciplines. Even so, Eliot is a long way from doing away with the distinction altogether:

> I have . . . suggested that it is impossible to fence off literary criticism from criticism on other grounds, and that moral, religious and social judgments cannot be wholly excluded. That they can, and that literary merit can be estimated in complete isolation, is the illusion of those who believe that literary merit alone can justify the publication of a book which could otherwise be condemned on moral grounds (T.C.C., pp. 25-26).

Considered in a broader perspective, then, this gradual shift in emphasis away from the separateness of literary criticism to the way that it is related to criticism of other types, can be seen as

another manifestation of what has been referred to all along as Eliot's modified aesthetic stance: his insistence that while literature is something of independent existence, it nevertheless draws upon a variety of other disciplines for its sustenance.

It is important to notice, finally, that in his writings about criticism, Eliot became involved in a debate over what is really the other half of the old question of poetry and belief: the question, that is, of the extent to which a critic or reader must share a poet's beliefs in order to enjoy his poetry. Once again, Eliot begins by taking the essentially aesthetic position that from the standpoint of literary criticism, the only issue that is pertinent is how successful the writer has been at realizing his materials; the question of the validity of those materials (which, of course, is precisely where the problem of belief or disbelief arises) is completely irrelevant. As time went on, however, Eliot became increasingly convinced that so-called pure aesthetic judgements are only an abstraction; that, in reality, a critic is always affected not only by the way that ideas are expressed but by the quality of the ideas themselves. In short, he realized that it is as impossible in the case of the critic to distinguish the man who makes aesthetic judgments from the man who has opinions about other things, as, in the case of the artist, it is to separate the man who uses ideas from the man who believes or disbelieves those ideas. An example of Eliot's early and essentially aesthetic stance on the issue is his 1929 essay on Dante in which he is still prepared to assert quite dogmatically that "the reader can obtain

the full 'literary' or (if you will) 'aesthetic' enjoyment without sharing the beliefs of the poet" (S.E., p. 269). In "Poetry and Propaganda," written the next year, Eliot modifies his position somewhat by admitting that the qualify of ideas used in a poem do have some effect on the way it is judged aesthetically:

> The one extreme is to like poetry merely for what it has to say: that is, to like it merely because it voices our own beliefs or prejudices -- which is of course to be quite indifferent to the poetry of the poetry. The other extreme is to like the poetry because the poet has manipulated his materials into perfect art, which is to be indifferent to the material, and to isolate our enjoyment of poetry from life. The one extreme is not enjoyment of poetry at all, the other is enjoyment of an abstraction which is merely called poetry. But between these extremes occurs a continuous range of appreciations, each of which has its limited validity.[35]

An even further movement away from the notion that the kind of ideas a poet uses need have no effect on aesthetic judgments of his work is apparent in The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism where Eliot now argues -- and this is quite a change from his earlier position -- that a reader can only enjoy a poem when the view of life it presents is "coherent, mature, and founded on the facts of experience"; "[w]hen it is one which the reader rejects as childish or feeble, it may . . . set up an almost complete check" (U.P.U.C., p. 96). In "Goethe as the Sage" (his final attempt to resolve the issue) Eliot merely tries to put into more practical terms the sort of modified stance he had taken since "Poetry and Propaganda," by suggesting that the proper approach to a poem involves two movements: first, an attempt by the reader or critic to put himself "in the position of a believer" (in which case what

would be under scrutiny are the ideas themselves); and second an effort to detach himself again and "to regard the poem from outside the belief" (in which case what would be assessed is the way the poet has manipulated those ideas) (O.P.P., p. 262). Such an approach, in short, by taking into account both the quality of the ideas themselves and the way that they have been manipulated by the poet, is thoroughly consistent with Eliot's modified aesthetic position regarding the separate-but-relatedness of poetry.

By now it should be clear that, far from constituting a wholesale rejection of aesthetic doctrine, Eliot's theory of literature would more accurately be described as a modified version of aestheticism. As we have seen, the principal difference between Eliot's approach and that of the aesthetes is that whereas the aesthetes tended to emphasize the autonomy of art, Eliot was inclined to place more stress on its relatedness, on the fact that when isolated from the various disciplines upon which it depends for its materials, it becomes nothing more than an abstraction. We have also seen how this concept of the separate-but-relatedness of art directly informs the position of modified aestheticism which Eliot takes with respect to each of the four topics examined: with respect to the function of poetry, the position that in addition to giving pleasure, poetry may also perform some incidental moral or social function; concerning the nature of poetry, that ideally poetry should strive to effect a balance between the subjective and objective sides of experience, between thought and feeling, form and content; regarding the role of the poet, that the poet should

endeavor to express his unique point of view, a view which draws upon both the subjective and the objective aspects of his experience; and finally, with regard to the function of criticism, that, though the focus of attention must always be the work itself, the literary critic may sometimes be required to supplement his conclusions with criticism from the standpoint of some other discipline. Finally, it was demonstrated how, on a deeper level still, Eliot's modified aesthetic stance -- his emphasis on the separate-but-relatedness of poetry and his preference for a more objective approach to poetry -- could be explained by the fact that, compared to the aesthetes, he was working with a fundamentally different concept of reality, with the notion that reality inheres neither in the mind alone (as the idealists, the philosophic contemporaries of the aesthetes, had believed) nor in the external world, but in the dialectic interaction between the subjective and objective sides of experience.

III. ELIOT'S POETRY IN THE TRADITION OF AESTHETICISM

We saw in the first chapter how the aesthetes, affected by the idealist notion that truth inheres in consciousness rather than in the external world, were predisposed towards a subjective kind of poetry, towards a poetry, that is, which had as its primary focus not the objective world of everyday experience but an imaginative world of ideal truth or beauty existing in the mind of the poet. It was also pointed out how this concentration on an invisible world beyond the realm of sense perception meant that the poet could never describe his experience directly but was always obliged to suggest it through the creation of an intangible atmosphere of mystery and spiritual suggestiveness. In practice this kind of atmosphere was created in several ways including the use of symbols (ordinary objects endowed with supernatural significations by being evoked rather than named directly), the substitution of a logic of feeling (the associative logic of inner mental processes) for a coherent development of argument or thought, the excision of prosaic connectives, descriptive passages, and explanatory rhetoric of any kind, and a concentration on the incantatory effect of sound and rhythm as an end in itself.

In the second chapter we observed how Eliot, who began with a fundamentally different conception of reality than the aesthetes (the notion that reality inheres neither in the mind alone nor in

the external world but in the dialectic interaction between mind and matter), tended to place a considerably greater emphasis on the importance of objectivity in poetry. In other words, because he regarded poetry as an attempt to capture in language the experiential reality continually generated by the subject-object interaction, he was able to demonstrate that, by themselves, the subjective components of experience (that is, thoughts and feelings) have no reality and therefore cannot be expressed in art unless they are united with sensation, the objective side of experience. It follows from this that the only way of achieving such a union would be to find what he calls an "objective correlative," a "set of objects, a situation, a chain of events . . . such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked" (S.W., p. 100). The fullest expression of this idea that poetry must be an expression of the "unified sensibility," of the whole of experiential reality, is his observation that "permanent literature is always a presentation; either a presentation of thought, or a presentation of feeling [a due recognition of the subjective aspect of experience] by a statement of events in human action or objects in the external world [an acknowledgement of the objective element of experience]" (S.W., pp. 64-65). In light of this definition, it becomes clear that his primary objection to aesthetic poetry is not the fact that it concentrates on subjective feelings and states of mind, but that it fails to focus and define these feelings by finding their exact equivalent in the external world of sensation.

Having outlined Eliot's objections to aesthetic poetry in theoretical terms, it remains in this chapter to examine the way in which his modified aesthetic stance -- his conviction that poetry should take into account the subjective as well as the objective side of experience -- is reflected in the actual poetry that he was engaged in writing at the various stages of his career. Summarily speaking, such an examination will reveal that the poetry of what might be called his early period (everything, that is, up to and including The Waste Land) is still largely within the aesthetic tradition in that it is primarily concerned with the exploration of inner states of mind. What sets it apart from this tradition, on the other hand, is mainly the fact that it is altogether more objective, more firmly grounded in concrete sensual imagery, and as a result is able (in a way that the earlier poetry, with its emphasis on vague atmospheric effects and its technique of evoking rather than naming objects directly, never could) to project highly specific states of mind. While the later poetry -- poetry belonging to what I have called his transitional period (beginning with The Hollow Men and ending with the publication of the "Landscapes") and to his final period (consisting of the Four Quartets) -- continues in many ways to reflect his modified aesthetic approach, it nevertheless differs from that approach in becoming increasingly preoccupied with the presentation of ideas as opposed to the objectification of feelings. This shift from an almost exclusive preoccupation with the expression of feeling to an interest in conveying feelings and ideas is evident in such

stylistic changes as a tendency to supplement the highly expansive private symbols of the early poetry (symbols which put forth an atmosphere of almost unlimited meaningfulness) with symbols of a more intensive allegorical nature which are used to illustrate or clarify specific ideas, a greater reliance on passages of relatively abstract discourse or analysis, and an increasing preference for structures built upon a logic of intellection rather than of feeling.

The Early Poetry

Of all Eliot's poetry, the works of the early period, because they are largely experimental in nature, are the most difficult about which to generalize. Indeed a large number of them including the so-called Oxford poems of the Prufrock volume (poems like "The Boston Evening Transcript," "Aunt Helen," and "Cousin Nancy") as well as the quatrain poems of Poems--1920, seem to fall under the category of the kind of craftsman's exercises to which Eliot was alluding in his "Introduction" to Ezra Pound: Selected Poems when he remarked that a poet must be "continually developing his medium for the moment when he really has something to say."[1] This, of course, is not to argue that these poems are therefore without merit in themselves, only to point out that they seem to lie somewhat outside the main line of his development as a poet, displaying such uncharacteristic features as a reliance on rigid stanzaic forms, a deliberately satiric intention, and a relative dearth of highly charged emotive images.

However, the poems of this period that have enjoyed the greatest success (poems like "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," "The Preludes," "Rhapsody on a Windy Night," "La Figlia Che Piange," and The Waste Land) all reflect, to varying degrees, Eliot's modified aesthetic stance, his insistence that poetry must express not only the subjective but also the objective side of experience. On the one hand, then, these poems exhibit many features that are typical of the aesthetic poetry of the previous generation, features such as a preoccupation with inner motivations and states of feeling rather than ideas, a preference for organic forms based upon the associative logic of feeling rather than of ratiocination, a careful avoidance of discursive rhetoric or explicit commentary of any kind, and a special feeling for the incantatory effect of sound and rhythm. On the other hand, they depart from that tradition in their overwhelming commitment to the delineation of genuine and highly specific human emotions rather than of the kind of generalized or stock poetic sentiments (usually a sense of melancholy or of yearning after an unattainable ideal) so characteristic of aesthetic poetry. This concentration on rendering precise rather than generalized states of feeling is reflected, in turn, in Eliot's handling of the imagery; the fact that, in contrast to the symbolists and their habit of evoking or suggesting rather than naming an object, he invariably focuses directly on the object, deftly singling out just those few concrete details needed to elicit the exact nuance of the emotion he wishes to convey. While to his contemporaries, accustomed to the mistiness of much

aesthetic poetry, this approach to imagery may have seemed startlingly original, it needs to be pointed out -- as Eliot himself, in discussing the early influences on his work, was the first to do[2] -- that this technique of attaching inner feelings to external stimuli had already been used not only by the English metaphysical poets of the seventeenth century but by such later French symbolists as Corbière and Laforgue, poets who belong to what Edmund Wilson has called the "conversational-ironic" (as opposed to the "serious-aesthetic") branch of that movement.[3]

An early and highly successful example of Eliot's modified aesthetic approach is "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock." That the poem does indeed fall into this category is reflected, first of all, in its structure which is based upon a flow of feeling rather than (as would be the case in a conventional dramatic monologue) a logic of narrative or argument. The poem, in other words, is an interior monologue, an attempt to reveal the inner workings of a complex and unique personality, and as such exhibits an associative pattern of organization rather like that of a dream. Accordingly, there is no action or plot in the ordinary sense; the reader is simply invited into Prufrock's mind and left to watch as the latter makes his way (in imagination, of course) through narrow streets to a sophisticated party, tries to work up the courage to propose to a woman, decides that he is unable to go through with it, and finally lapses into a melancholy reverie on his own absurdity and insignificance. That the poem is indeed structured to reflect the fragmentary discontinuous quality of a mental journey rather than

the sequential logic of ordinary narrative is evident from the numerous and abrupt scene shifts that occur throughout the poem -- shifts both in time and place. As the monologue progresses, for example, Prufrock seems to be at once in what is presumably his room ("the floor, here beside you and me"), making his way through "narrow streets," in the drawing room watching "women come and go/ Talking of Michelangelo," on the floor of "silent seas," and on the beach watching the mermaids. Furthermore, he appears to be living in what is at once the present ("the afternoon which sleeps so peacefully"), the remembered past ("and I have known the eyes already, known them all"), the immediate future ("When the evening is spread out against the sky"), and the indefinite future ("I grow old . . . I grow old . . ."). Clearly such discontinuities make little sense unless interpreted as an attempt to reproduce the actual flow of consciousness in the mind.

Related to the focus on the expression of an internal state of feeling and altogether characteristic of Eliot's modified aesthetic approach is the fact that the poem proceeds virtually without the interpolation on the part of the poet persona of any explicit commentary or explanation of any kind. Not only, for example, is there an absence of any prefatory material (the reader is plunged into Prufrock's stream of consciousness at once) but the sudden shifts in time and place alluded to above are accomplished without the benefit of any explanatory rhetoric whatsoever. The result is that the poem becomes a presentation rather than a description, a demonstration rather than a discussion, of a

particularly intense and highly unique state of mind.

The fundamentally aesthetic orientation of the poem is apparent, too, from its incantatory tone, the way that sound and rhythm combine to evoke a kind of slow sad music that perfectly embodies and helps to convey Prufrock's inner state of melancholy and boredom. Much of the effect is due, of course, to the anaphoric repetition of phrases like "let us go," "there will be time," "I have known," "would it have been worthwhile," repetitions which convey an almost kinesthetic conception of the endless hesitations and vacillations taking place in Prufrock's mind. Also contributing to the musical effect of the poem is the meter which is used to reinforce Prufrock's state of mind. His overwhelming sense of boredom, for example, is exactly captured in the highly regular repetitive rhythm of lines like "Time for you and time for me" and "For decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse" while the slow languorous rhythm of the passage beginning "The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window-panes,/The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the window-panes" is used to suggest his sense of lethargy and inanition.

The most important way, however, in which "Prufrock" exemplifies Eliot's modified aesthetic approach is the fact that it does not rely on music alone to convey the feeling (like so many aesthetic poems) but turns instead to the use of highly concrete sensory images to ensure that those feelings are conveyed precisely. A good example of this approach is the opening image (actually a conceit in the style of Donne) comparing the evening sky

to a "patient etherised upon a table," an image which, with its suggestion of an artificial peacefulness concealing an underlying unhealthiness and helplessness, becomes a precise objective correlative for the way that Prufrock's outward lethargy and indifference masks an acute inner loneliness and frustration. Similarly, his overwhelming sense of inadequacy in facing the responsibilities and decisions of life is given concrete embodiment in his wish to be a "pair of ragged claws/Scuttling across the floors of silent seas," an image which suggests his regressive mentality, his longing for the simplicity and insentience of a primitive animal existence. A final example of Eliot's use of concrete stimuli in the poem to evoke a precise state of feeling is Prufrock's vision of himself as an insect "formulated, sprawling on a pin, . . . pinned and wriggling on the wall," an image which captures his sense of acute self-consciousness and vulnerability.

Another early poem which exemplifies Eliot's modified aesthetic approach is "Rhapsody on a Windy Night." Its affinity with aesthetic poetry is evident, first of all, in that, like "Prufrock," it concentrates on the exploration of an internal state of mind rather than on the presentation of some event or situation in the external world. To be more specific, it focuses on the subjective world of a man taking a midnight stroll, the way that his mind adds to what the streets lamps reveal, various memories which explain and interpret his present situation:

> Every street lamp that I pass
> Beats like a fatalistic drum,
> And through the spaces of the dark
> Midnight shakes the memory.

That the poem reflects Eliot's modified aesthetic approach is also apparent in its structure which follows a flow of feeling rather than a more conventional logic of narrative or argument. For example, Eliot has done away with most of the prosaic joints and explanations that would normally be found in a monologue of this sort, substituting instead a succession of scenes and images which pass by with a rapidity and disjointedness intended to suggest the flow of ideas through the mind. In the course of the poem, for example, the speaker finds himself reliving moments in such diverse places as on the beach, in a factory yard, on a quay, by a pool, in the shuttered room of an unidentified female, and in a bar. All that is offered by way of direct explanation for these abrupt scene shifts (and even then, it is more than is ever given in "Prufrock"). is the observation that

> Whispering lunar incantations
> Dissolve the floors of memory
> And all its clear relations,
> Its divisions and precisions.

The clearest indication, however, that the poem is an expression of Eliot's modified aestheticism is the predominance of highly concrete sensory images which are used to communicate precise states of feeling. For example, the bizarre opening image of a madman trying to shake life back into a dead geranium becomes an objective correlative for the speaker's own feelings of frustration and futility as he tries to uncover some meaning, some evidence of spiritual vitality, in the scenes of squalor and degradation to which he is a witness. This image is only the first in a series of images depicting empty or dead things from which the essential life has

drained away, images which embody the speaker's awareness of the hollowness, the death-in-life quality, of existence devoid of spiritual significance: "a twisted branch upon the beach/Eaten smooth, and polished," "A broken spring in a factory yard,/Rust that clings to the form that the strength has left/Hard and curled and ready to snap," "the hand of the child, automatic. . . . I could see nothing behind that child's eye," "the reminiscence . . ./Of sunless dry geraniums." This technique of endowing external objects with emotional significations is also operative in the speaker's description of his own existence in the last stanza, a description which, though consisting of only a few brief details, manages to capture with remarkable clarity the essential pettiness and predictability of that existence: "The bed is open; the tooth-brush hangs on the wall,/Put your shoes at the door, sleep, prepare for life." The result is that, far from being description for its own sake, the scene becomes a powerful objective correlative for the profound sense of terror and despair that accompanies the speaker's realization that his own life is just as hollow and devoid of purpose as any of those he has just described. The irony of this realization is clinched in the last two lines where "life" (precisely what the speaker lacks) is forced into a jingling rhyme with "knife," an indirect suggestion, perhaps, that one way out of this apparently hopeless situation is suicide.

Still another example of Eliot's modified aestheticism is "Preludes," a poem which is typical of this approach not only in its concentration on inner states of feeling, but in its determination to

give those feelings concrete embodiment. While at first glance, the poem might seem to consist merely of a series of neutral descriptions, closer analysis reveals that the outward scenes never exist for their own sake but are charged with the emotions and attitudes of the speaker. For the most part, the speaker's attitude to the city he describes seems to be one of distaste or even revulsion, a feeling that is reflected in his preoccupation with images of ugliness and squalor ("grimy scraps," "broken blinds and chimney pots," "dingy shades"), of staleness and repetitiveness ("the burnt out ends of smoky days," "stale smells of beer," "hands/. . . raising dingy shades/In a thousand furnished rooms"), and (most disconcerting of all because they imply that the people are no longer fully human) of disconnected body parts ("muddy feet that press to early coffee-stands," "short square fingers stuffing pipes," "eyes assured of certain certainties"). But while the dominant feeling is one of revulsion, there is nevertheless an unmistakable note of tenderness in the speaker's perceptions as though, beneath the monotony and the grime, he were dimly aware of the presence of something far better, something genuinely human:

> I am moved by fancies that are curled
> Around these images, and cling:
> The notion of some infinitely gentle
> Infinitely suffering thing.

While this idea is rejected almost as soon as it is uttered ("Wipe your hand across your mouth, and laugh"), the feeling of tenderness persists to the very end where it is embodied in the pathetic image of "ancient women/Gathering fuel in vacant lots." Also indicative of the essentially aesthetic orientation of the poem is the fact

that, except for the brief coda, this complex state of mind is communicated without the interpolation of any explicit commentary on the part of the narrator.

Also typical of Eliot's aesthetic approach is the short lyric, "La Figlia Che Piange." Besides the fact that it displays a characteristically aesthetic preoccupation with an internal state of feeling, the poem is interesting for the way that it anticipates a technique that Eliot was to develop much more fully in certain sections of The Waste Land, namely, that of finding a complete situation rather than just a single object or series of objects to convey a particular feeling. In the case of "La Figlia," the emotion to be expressed is one of mingled cynicism and regret, and the situation chosen to embody it is that of a man (the speaker) relating how a girl, weeping in the autumn sunshine at the top of a flight of stone steps near a garden urn, was deserted by her lover (probably a younger self of the speaker). That the speaker's attitude towards this scene is primarily one of regret is evident from the way that he inadvertently includes several details in his description that indicate his sympathy for the woman. Not only, for example, does he make reference to her "pained surprise" and the "fugitive resentment" in her eyes, but he compares the leave-taking to the departure of the soul from the body, a departure -- and this is the significant detail -- that leaves the body "torn and bruised." Furthermore, despite his outward cynicism, his determination to treat the parting as a purely aesthetic event (an opportunity for a "gesture and a pose"), his troubled admission that the girl

"Compelled [his] imagination many days,/Many days and many hours," and that "Sometimes these cogitations still amaze/The troubled midnight and the noon's repose" would seem to indicate that his true feeling is one of regret and loss.

In addition to giving objective embodiment to an inner state of feeling, "La Figlia" is characteristic of Eliot's modified aesthetic approach in two other ways: first, in its adherence to a logic of feeling rather than of intellection, and second in its concentration on achieving an effect of incantation. The fact that "La Figlia" is structured according to an associative logic of feeling is apparent from the way that present perceptions and past memories are joined together indiscriminately exactly as they would be in the mind. In the first stanza, for example, the speaker is apparently reliving the moment of parting and as a result not only speaks in the present tense (all the verbs are imperatives) but addresses the woman in the second person (as "you"). With the second stanza, however, the scene suddenly shifts to the present with the result that the speaker now discusses the same event in the past tense and refers to the same lovers in the third person (as "he" or "she"). For the rest of the poem, the setting remains the present with the exception of a brief flash-back in the latter half of the second stanza where the speaker once again assumes his old identity as lover and refers to the couple as "we." As in the case of the earlier poems, all these changes in time and place are accomplished without the benefit of any preliminaries or prosaic joints whatsoever. Finally, it is important to notice how the

dominant emotion of the poem, though more than adequately embodied in the actual situation, is reinforced by the sad but intensely moving music of the verse itself. Generally speaking, the two most important devices in creating this effect are anaphora (the repetition of phrases like "Weave, weave the sunlight in your hair," "So I would have had," "Some way") and consonance (the repetition of certain sounds as in the line "Her hair over her arms and her arms full of flowers").

All of these characteristics that have been taken as indicative of Eliot's modified aesthetic approach -- a concentration on inner states of feeling rather than external objects or events, a preference for associative rather than strictly logical patterns of organization, a tendency to embody feelings in concrete external stimuli, an avoidance of prosaic connectives or explicit commentaries of any kind, and an interest in the incantatory effect of sound and rhythm -- are fully apparent in what is undoubtedly Eliot's most aesthetic poem, The Waste Land. That the focus of the poem, to begin with, is indeed on internal states of feeling -- on the emotions and understandings with which the mind endows what is seen, as distinct from the objects or events themselves -- is apparent from the contradiction and frustration that inevitably results from any attempt to read the poem as a straightforward narrative or as an objective description of the external world. The difficulty disappears, however, when it is recognized that what the poem consists of is a mental journey; that the multitude of characters, settings and events of which it is comprised are really only

projections or memories residing in the mind of Tiresias who, as the most comprehensive character, uniting within himself the roles of both sexes, might be called the central consciousness, the focus of feeling, in the poem. That this is indeed the case, that what matters in the poem is not the external scenes or events but the feelings and attitudes with which Tiresias endows them, is confirmed by Eliot's own note to the effect that "what Tiresias sees [i.e. as distinct from what actually is] . . . is the substance of the poem."

As would be expected, this emphasis on internal states of feeling is reflected in the structure of the poem, the fact that instead of following a conventional logic of argument or of narrative development, it proceeds according to the kind of associative logic characteristic of mental processes. Accordingly, the poem is free of story telling or philosophic exposition of any kind, consisting, instead, of a series of superficially unrelated scenes, allusions, quotations and events that pass by with a rapidity and disjointedness intended to suggest the flow of memories and ideas through the mind. In the opening section, for example, the focus shifts rapidly from a somewhat generalized depiction of a reluctant spring, to a picture of Marie walking and taking coffee in a Munich Hofgarten, to a biblical landscape of desert and stone, to a scene from a Wagnerian opera, to an account of a romantic parting in a hyacinth garden, to a description of a consultation with a clairvoyant named Madame Sosostris, to a picture of a dispirited crowd crossing London Bridge on a winter morning. The same technique of

abrupt juxtaposition is used in the rest of the poem as well though in general the later sections contain a greater frequency of longer and more fully developed scenes, scenes such as the portrayal of the elegant aristocratic woman trapped in a loveless marriage in the first section of Part II, the account of Lil and her husband overheard in a pub in the second half of Part II, and the depiction of the sordid affair between the clerk and the typist in Part III. As in the case of the earlier poems, these sudden juxtapositions and discontinuities are accomplished without the interpolation on the part of the poet-protagonist of any kind of direct explanation or commentary.

Another way in which The Waste Land exemplifies Eliot's modified aesthetic approach is in its overwhelming commitment to the use of concrete external stimuli -- what Eliot would call "objective correlatives" -- to evoke inner states of mind. But whereas in most of the earlier poems a single image (or sometimes a medley of images) had often been sufficient to elicit the desired emotion, here, because the state of mind to be conveyed is so much more complex, the correlatives used to evoke it are correspondingly more complicated: sometimes a character, sometimes a literary quotation, sometimes a reference to mythology or legend, sometimes an entire dramatic situation is required to elicit the particular emotion that is to be expressed. In other words, far from being merely fragments of a narrative from which the normal links have been cut, the various characters, scenes, events, quotations and allusions which comprise the poem should be thought of as objective correlatives, as attempts

to give concrete sensuous embodiment to the unique and highly complex states of feeling residing in the mind of Tiresias, the central consciousness of the poem.

Although this state of mind is in many ways a very perplexing one, it ultimately seems to be rooted in two basic impulses: a negative impulse, on the one hand, which finds only ugliness and disappointment in what are normally counted the satisfactions of mortal existence, and a positive impulse, on the other, to find some religious emotion, some transforming experience, that will take the place of what has been lost. Now the correlative that expresses this complex state of mind -- this frustrated sense of belonging to two conflicting realms of existence at the same time -- most succinctly is the episode in the hyacinth garden. Although the incident contained in this scene is not developed in much detail, it apparently concerns a moment of intense romantic love so overwhelming that it becomes for the speaker a kind of mystical experience, an introduction into the realm of love beyond the merely human. But because this moment of contact with the Divine, this fleeting glimpse into "the heart of light, the silence," is an experience of such extraordinary intensity as to seem all-sufficient, it has the effect of rendering everything else, all mundane experiences including that of romantic love itself, utterly desolate and sterile in comparison. By and large, the scenes and events which comprise the rest of the poem serve only to amplify and develop the emotion embodied in this incident, either -- and this is particularly true of the earlier sections of the poem -- by giving

objective expression to the protagonist's negative feelings of disillusionment and revulsion, or by embodying his dim but positive sense of a transcendent world of spiritual reality.

Examples of the first kind of scene, scenes which serve as correlatives for the protagonist's sense of disillusionment with temporal existence, include the opening depiction of a "cruel" April which goads into life what would as soon remain dead; Marie's childhood recollection of a time, so different from the monotonous present, when she felt truly free; the description of the desert of "stony rubbish" and "broken images"; and the concluding description of London, the "unreal city" as a modern day inferno. Other examples of scenes which function as objective correlatives for the protagonist's sense of the boredom and sterility of ordinary existence include, from "A Game of Chess," the depiction of the aristocratic couple trapped in their loveless relationship, and the account of deception, unfaithfulness and abortion in a working class marriage; from "The Fire Sermon" the opening depiction of the polluted rat-infested river, the encounter with the degenerate Smyrna merchant, the sordid episode of the clerk and the typist, and the account of the seduction of the three Thames daughters; and finally, from "What the Thunder Said" the moving account of a desperate desert journey in search of water.

The protagonist's positive impulse, on the other hand, his search for some means of transcending the otherwise endless round of mortal existence, finds objective embodiment in what might be called the recurrent motifs of transformation in the poem: motifs

such as the notion of regenerative death through "sea change," borrowed from The Tempest, the myth of the transformation of Philomel into a nightingale of "inviolable voice," the reference to the resurrection of the slain deity of the vegetation myths, the gospel record of the death and Resurrection of Christ, and the idea of spiritual regeneration through purgation borrowed from Dante. Since, as we have just seen, the early part of the poem is dominated by scenes of desert waste, unhealthy human relationships and urban squalor -- all correlatives for the negative impulse -- it is not surprising to find that when they first appear, these transformation motifs usually have only the ironic effect of rendering the surrounding gloom of despair and spiritual stagnation even more dense and oppressive by comparison. Examples of this kind of irony include the protagonist's sudden introjection during the interview with the spiritually bankrupt Madame Sosostris of the motif of sea change ("Those are pearls that were his eyes. Look!"); the reference to the transformation of Philomel (ll. 97-103) in the midst of a description of the opulent boudoir of a woman upon whom the real significance of the myth would be entirely lost; the husband's anguished recollection, later in the same scene, of the hope of redemptive death in The Tempest ("I remember/Those are pearls that were his eyes"); and the introduction at the beginning of "The Fire Sermon" of an ironic parallel between Ferdinand of The Tempest for whom the notion of sea change was a real hope, and the modern protagonist for whom the same notion (at least to judge

from the white bodies and dry bones by which he is surrounded and which have obviously not undergone any kind of transformation) is only a hollow mockery.

As the poem progresses, however, images of transformation gradually begin to win out over the earlier imagery of sterility and squalor, and as they do, the feeling of the poem changes accordingly. This gradual lifting of the mood of oppression is first noticeable at the end of "The Fire Sermon" where the imagery of fire, while serving to sum up the theme of sterile lust which had dominated the poem to this point, is also used to introduce the motif of regeneration through purgation. What is merely a suggestion here, however, is picked up and expanded upon in the next section which is devoted entirely to an enactment, through the example of Phlebas, of the motif of sea change. Although the symbolic act of transformation is not completed here -- the bones are only "picked in whispers," not changed into living choral -- the intense lyricism of the movement with its suggestion of what Helen Gardener calls "an ineffable peace, a passage backward through a dream, to a dreamless sleep in which the stain of living is washed away"[4] suggests that what is indeed being objectified here is the state of mind of one undergoing the first step in a symbolic process of transformation: a willing acquiescence to the dissolution of the old self in preparation for the birth of the new.

This gradual intensification of the positive impulse towards transformation continues into the final section of the poem where, instead of the motif of sea change, it is embodied in a collocation

of two other transformation motifs: the Christian story of the Resurrection of Christ and the myth of the grail quest to restore fertility to the land. The opening passage, for example, which is set in the interval between the Crucifixion and the Resurrection, evokes a state of feeling almost identical to that of the last movement: a state, that is, of immense relief, on the one hand, that the suffering involved in the death of the natural self is finally over (the finality conveyed by the repetition of the word "after" at the beginning of the first three lines), and of bitter disappointment, on the other, that nothing else, no new life, has as yet come to take its place: "We who were living are now dying/With a little patience." This feeling of unfulfillment and disappointment finds it objective correlative in the next section in the depiction of the grail knight toiling across a parched landscape of barren rock and nightmare visions (a woman fiddling "whisper music" on her hair, "bats with baby faces," towers "upside down in air") in search of the chapel perilous and the key to the restoration of fertility to the land. The fact, however, that now for the first time in the poem both motifs of transformation are carried through to their conclusion -- the speaker has a vision, however tentative and indistinct, of the risen Christ "gliding wrapt in a brown mantle," and there is rain for the parched land in the form of a "damp gust" -- seems to indicate that at last the religious emotion, absent since the mystical moment in the garden, has been recovered. What is particularly significant, is the fact that this recovery of spiritual vision seems to be accompanied by a restoration of the

springs of human emotion as well, a restoration that is apparent in the protagonist's subsequent realization that, far from being something worthy of renunciation, the experience of romantic love in the hyacinth garden, the "awful daring of a moment's surrender," was in fact one of the few moments in his life when he was truly alive. With the aid of hindsight, he is now able to recognize this moment of romantic involvement as a valid manifestation of the higher love, as an experience the significance of which lies outside the temporal pattern of life and death altogether:

> By this, and this only, we have existed
> Which is not to be found in our obituaries
> Or in memories draped by the beneficent spider
> Or under seals broken by the lean solicitor
> In our empty rooms.

That the negative impulse towards despair and rejection has indeed been largely supplanted during the course of the poem by the more positive impulse towards regeneration and transformation is evident, finally from the coda which constitutes the last objective correlative in the poem. Here instead of inhabiting a desert landscape as was so often the case earlier, the protagonist is now depicted on a shore with the arid plane behind him, an indication that the emotional trauma of which so much of the poem is a record, is now largely something of the past.

A final way in which The Waste Land demonstrates Eliot's modified aesthetic approach is the emphasis that is placed on the element of incantation. This, of course, is not to suggest that the tone of the entire poem is one of sustained lyricism; indeed, some passages, such as Marie's recollection of her youth in Germany or

the entire pub scene of Part II are as decidedly unpoetic and colloquial as anything Eliot ever wrote. Nevertheless -- and this has to do with the growing intensity of the religious emotion -- as the poem progresses the incantatory tone becomes more and more pronounced. The effect is first really noticeable at the end of "The Fire Sermon" where the tone of lyricism established in the passage describing the London fishmen -- a passage rendered particularly melodious by its rich rhymes and open vowel sounds -- is continued into the Thames-daughters' song that follows, a song in which the irregularly placed rhymes and the assymetrical rhythms (variations on a basic two stress line) capture almost exactly the swinging motion of the sails being described:

> Red sails
> Wide
> To leeward, swing on the heavy spar
> The barges wash
> Drifting logs
> Down Greenwich reach
> Past the Isle of Dogs.

With the fifth section, "What the Thunder Said," the element of lyricism becomes even more pervasive and at times -- as in the famous water dripping song (ll. 346-358) with its hypnotic rhythm, its word repetitions, and its concentration on images without context[5] -- is so pronounced that the effect is one of almost pure incantation:

> If there were water
> And no rock
> If there were rock
> And also water
> And water
> A spring
> A pool among the rock

If there were the sound of water only
Not the cicada
And dry grass singing
But sound of water over a rock
Where the hermit-thrush sings in the pine trees
Drip drop drip drop drop drop drop
But there is no water.

In short, then, The Waste Land, with its concentration on the exploration of an inner state of mind, its adherence to a logic of feeling rather than of intellection, its avoidance of explanatory or connective matter of any kind, its commitment to the concrete expression of feeling, and its emphasis on the element of incantation, constitutes the fullest practical application of Eliot's modified aesthetic approach -- his attempt to create a poetry that would take into account not only the subjective but the objective aspect of experience as well.

The Transitional Poetry

While the poetry written during what I have called Eliot's transitional period (the period, that is, between the composition of The Waste Land and the Four Quartets) does not signal any drastic change in Eliot's poetry, it does differ from the earlier works in that it becomes increasingly preoccupied with the presentation of ideas as opposed to the expression of feelings. Such a shift from an almost exclusive preoccupation with embodying states of feeling to an interest in giving concrete embodiment to feelings and ideas is reflected in the kind of stylistic changes that differentiate the transitional works from those of the first period: changes such as

a tendency to supplement the highly evocative private symbols so characteristic of the earlier works with symbols of a more restricted allegorical nature which, in addition to their emotive value, have a definite meaning; an increasing preference for rational as opposed to associative patterns of organization, and an increasing reliance on passages of relatively abstract discourse or analysis.

The earliest work of this period, The Hollow Men, is a transitional poem in the truest sense of the word, for while it continues to exhibit many of the characteristics of the earlier poetry, it also contains, at least in embryo form, many of the features that were to become standard in the later works. To begin with its affinities to the earlier works: it reflects, first of all, Eliot's essentially aesthetic preoccupation with the exploration of inner states of mind as opposed to a description or analysis of external reality. To be more precise, it examines the state of mind of an individual caught in the throes of an intense spiritual crisis who is aware, on the one hand, of the complete meaninglessness, the death-in-life-like quality of existence without God, but who, at the same time -- whether through indifference or a failure of the will -- feels powerless to undertake the discipline that is required for rebirth.

The essentially aesthetic orientation of the poem is also apparent in its structure, the fact that, like the earlier works, it adheres to an associative rather than a strictly logical pattern of organization. Accordingly, rather than functioning as links in a

narrative or stages in a philosophic argument, the various sections constitute relatively independent entities which cohere simply by the fact that the feelings they embody all emanate from the mind of one central consciousness. This, at any rate, is the only principle of organization that can explain why, at various states in its composition, not only individual sections but different combinations of these sections were published and apparently regarded as independent poems; had the poem been built according to a more conventional form of organization, had its intention been to tell a story or present an argument, such massive changes as the reordering of entire sections, would have destroyed the poem altogether.[6]

A third way in which The Hollow Men resembles the earlier poetry is its commitment to the use of concrete imagery to evoke precise states of feeling. More specifically, in order to convey the complex state of mind represented by the speaker, Eliot creates a detailed symbolic landscape consisting of several "kingdoms," each of which embodies a particular facet of the emotion which the speaker experiences in his struggle to achieve spiritual rebirth. What is variously referred to in the poem as "death's kingdom," "cactus land," "the dead land," or "this valley of the dying stars," for example, is used to convey the speaker's consciousness of his present condition of spiritual stagnation. That this is indeed a kingdom of life-in-death is indicated by the kind of images used to describe it, images of desert and drought ("dry grass," "our dry cellar," "broken stone," "the prickly pear"), of blindness ("The

eyes [a symbol of spiritual truth in the poem] are not here/There are no eyes here"), of inarticulateness (the inhabitants have "dried voices," they "grope together/And avoid speech," and their kingdom is called a "broken jaw"), and of circularity ("Here we go round the prickly pear"). It is significant, too, that the inhabitants of this kingdom are described as being gathered on the beach of a "tumid river," a suggestion, perhaps, that, like the dead waiting to be ferried across the river Styx to the underworld, the speaker is on the verge of a passage into a new order of existence, one that both compels and terrifies him.

Another state of feeling is suggested by what is referred to in the poem as "death's dream kingdom." This kingdom seems to represent a kind of dream-like state in which the speaker is able to visualize the new life to which he is aspiring even though he is completely incapable as yet of achieving it in reality. This state of partial awareness is suggested by the images of poignant but elusive beauty with which this kingdom is associated, images such as "sunlight on a broken column," "a tree swinging," and "voices . . ./In the wind's singing." Still another kingdom in the poem is "death's other Kingdom," a kingdom which, given the fact that it is inhabited by those who crossed with direct eyes," and that it is linked (by being capitalized) with the kingdom referred to in the fragment from the Lord's Prayer at the end, appears to symbolize eternity, a realm of total spiritual reality. Finally, there is the "twilight kingdom," a kingdom which, to judge from its Dantesque setting (it is a place of "final meeting" and of

Beatrician eyes which reappear as "the perpetual star/Multifoliate rose"), is meant to signify a purgatorial condition, a state of voluntary spiritual refinement. That the twilight kingdom is indeed symbolic of a purgatorial state is also evident from the ambiguous feelings with which it is associated, the fact that it is at once a place of suffering which the speaker wishes to avoid ("No nearer/ Not that final meeting/In the twilight kingdom"), and at the same time a place that offers hope of spiritual rebirth (symbolized by the reappearance of the "multifoliate rose"). Most significant of all, however, is the fact that the hope offered in this kingdom is offered not to "hollow" men but to "empty" men, a suggestion that what this kingdom really embodies is the state of mind of one learning the meaning of true "emptiness" -- complete detachment from worldly concerns -- as opposed to mere "hollowness," a condition of passive nonentity.[7]

Insofar, then, as the poem concentrates on the exploration and objectification of an internal state of mind and insofar as it adheres to an associative rather than a strictly logical pattern of organization, it qualifies as an example of Eliot's modified aesthetic approach. Where it differs from that approach, however, is in its greater commitment to ideas, a commitment that is reflected, first of all, in its imagery which, in addition to embodying states of feeling, is encumbered with a certain weight of conceptual meaning as well. To be more specific, it is as if the poem's elaborate landscape of kingdoms and rivers, though primarily a means of projecting a state of mind, is also being used, however

obliquely, to refer to some external theological system, one that bears a rather striking similarity to that used by Dante in the Divine Comedy.[8] The result is that, though far from exhibiting the rigidity of allegory, the imagery of The Hollow Men seems less evocative, less expansive, than that of the earlier poetry.

The contention that Eliot was becoming increasingly interested in the more intensive and illustrative imagery typical of allegory is supported by some remarks he made in an essay on Dante published four years after The Hollow Men. In that essay he attempts to distinguish between the kind of imagery used by Shakespeare and that used by Dante, a distinction that helps to explain the difference between his own early and later imagery. Shakespeare's imagery, he writes, "is expansive rather than intensive; its purpose is to add to what you see"; Dante's imagery, on the other hand, is used "to make you see more clearly . . . and is explanatory" (S.E., p. 244). And that, ultimately, he attributed the difference in the two kinds of imagery to the fact that one poet (Shakespeare) was primarily interested in objectifying feelings and the other (Dante) in embodying ideas, is apparent from his emphasis, in discussing Dante's "allegorical method," on the importance to that method of having a definite meaning:

> We have to consider the type of mind which by nature and practice tended to express itself in allegory: and, for a competent poet, allegory means clear visual images. And clear visual images are given much more intensity by having a meaning -- we do not need to know what that meaning is, but in our awareness of the image we must be aware that the meaning is there too. Allegory is only one poetic method, but it is a method which has very great advantages (S.E., p. 243).

Eliot's increasing interest in exploring ideas as well as feelings is also reflected in the way that, in comparison to the early poetry, The Hollow Men makes more explicit use of language of a discursive rather than that of a purely emotive or symbolic nature. This increased reliance on abstract language is evident mainly in the last section where, except for the "Kingdom" mentioned in the fragment from the Lord's Prayer, the symbolic landscape, so prominent in the earlier sections of the poem, virtually disappears to be replaced by a discursive passage stating more or less directly what earlier had been presented imaginatively: the fact, that, however much they may wish to change, the hollow men are emotionally paralyzed, hopelessly incapable of transforming will into action:

> Between the idea
> And the reality
> Between the motion
> And the act
> Falls the Shadow.

Like The Hollow Men, the Ariel Poems (published between 1927 and 1930) are transitional in the sense that, while they certainly have affinities with the early poetry, they contain certain stylistic features indicative of a more idea-oriented approach. In the case of "Journey of the Magi," for example, this emphasis on ideas manifests itself both in the structure of the poem -- a structure which follows a logic of narrative rather than the associative logic typical of the earlier poems -- and in the kind of diction that is employed -- the fact that the imaginative language of imagery and symbol is occasionally supplemented by

language of a more abstract analytical quality. The entire last stanza of the poem, for instance, consists of a relatively discursive passage in which the old magus attempts to sum up in abstract terms the enormously paradoxical nature of the event he witnessed so long ago:

> were we led all that way for
> Birth or Death? There was a Birth, certainly,
> We had evidence and no doubt. I had seen birth and death,
> But had thought they were different; this Birth was
> Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death.

For the most part, however, the poem remains decidedly within the aesthetic tradition, exemplifying, for example, the technique so prevalent in Eliot's earlier poetry of using concrete external stimuli to convey inner states of feeling. The first two stanzas, for instance, constitute a kind of symbolic landscape, the various features of which combine to suggest the old magus' profoundly ambivalent attitude to the birth he has witnessed. The one image of vitality in the landscape, for example -- that of a "temperate valley,/Wet, below the snow line, smelling of vegetation,/With a running stream and a water-mill beating the darkness" -- would seem to suggest that he is at least dimly aware of the hope and the potential for a new intensity of living that this event signifies. Yet the fact that the landscape is largely given over to images of hardship ("the ways deep and the weather sharp,/The very dead of winter") and of foreboding ("three trees on the low sky," "Six hands at an open door dicing for pieces of silver") would seem to indicate, at the same time, this his dominant feeling is one of resentment and despair; he knows very well that, to the "old

dispensation" with its comfortable ease, this birth spells a kind of death.

The next two Ariel poems, "A Song for Simeon" and "Animula" constitute a much more radical departure from the style of the earlier poetry. In the case of the first, for example, though the main focus is still on exploring a precise state of feeling, the technique (so prevalent in the earlier poetry) of finding an objective correlative to convey that feeling is almost totally absent; for the most part Eliot is content merely to let Simeon describe his state of mind directly: "I am tired of my own life and the lives of those after me," "I am dying in my own death and the deaths of those after me." One notable exception to this approach is the use, in the first stanza, of the image of Roman hyacinths "blooming in bowls" as though in defiance of winter ("the stubborn season"). This image seems to suggest that the birth of Christ has inspired in the speaker a tiny spark of hope that cannot be extinguished even by the latter's own profound sense of world-weariness. But with "Animula" the shift from a concentration on feeling to an emphasis on ideas is much more obvious: the entire poem is devoted to an exploration of a theological concept, namely the notion that as an individual matures his soul gradually forgets its divine origin, directs its desires towards material objects and ends up by becoming unreal, a mere "Shadow of its own shadows, spectre in its own gloom." As would be expected, this concentration on an idea rather than a state of mind is reflected both in the structure of the poem (which follows a logic of argument rather than of association) and in the kind of diction that is used,

diction which is comparatively dry and lacking in concrete images:

> Issues from the hand of time the simple soul
> Irresolute and selfish, misshapen, lame,
> Unable to fare forward or retreat,
> Fearing the warm reality, the offered good,
> Denying the importunity of the blood,
> Shadow of its own shadows, spectre in its own gloom.

By comparison, "Marina," though a later poem, is much more in the style of the earlier works, exhibiting, for example, not only a similar interest in exploring a precise state of mind, but in giving that state of mind concrete sensuous embodiment. Specifically, the state of mind being examined in the poem is that of an individual undergoing a process of spiritual rebirth into an order of reality beyond the senses; and the correlative used to evoke this subjective experience is an adaptation of the recognition scene in Shakespeare's Pericles in which the old king awakens to find his daughter alive whom he had presumed dead. In Eliot's poem, Marina, the lost daughter, becomes the symbol for the new spiritual life to which the speaker is aspiring, and as such becomes at the same time the focal point around which the various images used to suggest the qualities of that life -- its essential vitality, joyousness, and innocence-- arrange themselves, images such as "grey rocks," "scent of pine," "woodthrush singing through the fog," and "Whispers and small laughter between leaves and hurrying feet." The speaker's old self, on the other hand, the merely physical self which had existed in ignorance of spiritual reality, finds its objective correlative in the image of an old battered ship with a weak rigging, a rotten canvas, and a leaky garboard strake. The only indication that the poem does indeed belong to the transitional

rather than the early period is the fact that it incorporates one passage of comparatively abstract discourse, a passage which, by calling attention to some four of the seven deadly sins, makes it clear that the symbolism of the poem, though important primarily for its emotive value, is also being used to illustrate a particular set of ideas, specifically those of Christian theology.

A more typically transitional work is Ash Wednesday which, despite its clear affinities with the earlier poems, contains several stylistic features indicative of Eliot's growing preoccupation with ideas rather than exclusively with feelings. However, the fact that the primary focus of the poem still seems to be on giving expression to an internal state of mind suggests that the orientation of the poem is still largely an aesthetic one. To be more precise, the state of mind explored in the poem is that of an individual undergoing a process of spiritual rebirth who at this point is still feeling mainly the frustration of being caught between the conflicting claims of two orders of existence, one (the physical) which no longer seems tolerable, the other (the spiritual) which can as yet be apprehended only as a kind of haunting but beautiful dream.

Like the earlier poems, too, Ash Wednesday is constructed according to an associative rather than a strictly logical pattern of organization; far from telling a story or developing an argument, its various sections constitute "blocks" of feeling bound together by nothing more substantial than the fact that they all represent phases of awareness existing in the mind of one central

consciousness. Such an associative principle of organization, at any rate, is the only one that can explain how the poem manages to cohere even though three of its sections originally existed and were published as separate poems apparently before the idea of a longer multi-sectional work was even conceived.[9]

In addition to its concentration on feeling and its adherence to an associative pattern of organization, Ash Wednesday is also related to the earlier poetry in that it attempts not merely to describe but to give concrete embodiment to internal states of feeling. This interest in giving feelings objective expression is reflected in the poem in the way that Eliot manages to project the complex state of mind represented by the speaker -- his agonizing consciousness of belonging to two conflicting orders of existence at the same time -- onto a graphic symbolic landscape. Although the details of this landscape vary somewhat from section to section, the speaker is generally pictured in his present condition as living in exile in a kind of twilight world amongst the blue rocks and sands of a desert, while the new spiritual life to which he is aspiring is represented as a beautiful garden on the fringe of that desert, a garden which is entered by passing between two yew trees symbolizing mortality and immortality respectively. Also inhabiting this landscape is a mysterious figure, a lady, who, because she seems to possess both human and divine characteristics (she is at once "distressed," "torn," "exhausted," "worried" as well as "calm," "most whole," "life-giving," and "reposeful"), functions as an intercessory figure, mediating between the worlds

of flesh and spirit, the desert and the garden, human and divine love.

What makes this symbolic landscape particularly effective, however, is the fact that its various features undergo significant modifications in the course of the poem in a way that conveys subtle changes in the spiritual state of the speaker. As would be expected, in the early part of the poem, it is the desert with its suggestion of spiritual aridity that tends to dominate while any reference to the garden is merely to call attention to its absence. This, for example, is the case in the first section where the desert, though not described directly, is implied by the speaker's declaration that he is alienated from the garden, unable to "drink/ There, where trees flower, and springs flow." In the next section, too, the dominant setting remains that of the desert (though a desert which, being "cool" and "quiet" is infinitely more appealing than that of The Waste Land), while the garden, alluded to briefly in the lyric sung by the bones to the lady, seems at this point to exist only at the level of vision. That the speaker is indeed making spiritual progress, however, is evident in the fourth section where the desert (its dry rocks having been "made cool" and its "sands firm"), all but disappears, to be replaced by the most detailed picture so far of the garden, a garden complete with fountains, springs, birds, yew trees, and a "garden god." An even more positive state of mind is indicated in the fifth section where the speaker is now situated, significantly, in the "last desert" between the "last blue rocks," a desert which, as a

result of the intervention of the lady (whose color is also blue), seems already to have begun to take on the characteristics of the garden. By the final section of the poem, though the speaker is still pictured in a state of exile amongst the blue rocks of the desert, the sheer prolixity and intensity of the images of natural beauty (images drawn mainly from the Massachusetts coast of Eliot's youth), suggest that the garden has indeed begun to bloom in the desert, that the state of spiritual drought, so acute earlier in the poem, is finally coming to an end.

The essentially aesthetic orientation of the poem is reflected finally, in the attention that is given throughout to the element of incantation. Indeed, of all Eliot's major poems, Ash Wednesday is the one that is the most intensely and consistently lyrical, the musical effect helping to convey an emotional sense of the beautiful but elusive world of spiritual reality which the speaker is attempting to enter. By and large, the music of the poem inheres in its rhythms which are subtly varied from section to section to reflect the exact nuance of the emotion being expressed. In the first section, for example, the highly repetitive syntax and the frequent use of double verbs ("strive to strive," "know I shall not know") help to reproduce rhythmically a sense of the paralyzing mental activity, the futile peeling back of motive upon motive which characterizes the speaker's state of mind at this point. By contrast, the highly regular measured cadences of the hymn to the lady in Part II create an atmosphere of serenity and repose entirely befitting this silent figure of mediation. A final

example of the way rhythm is adapted to feeling in the poem is the fifth section where the halting rhythm and convoluted syntax capture exactly the speaker's mood of spiritual unrest, hesitation and doubt:

> If the lost word is lost, if the spent word is spent
> If the unheard, unspoken
> Word is unspoken, unheard;
> Still is the unspoken word, the Word unheard,
> The Word without a word, the Word within
> The world and for the world;
> And the light shone in darkness and
> Against the Word the unstilled world still whirled
> About the centre of the silent Word.

While in most respects, then, Ash Wednesday belongs firmly within the aesthetic tradition, it nevertheless exhibits a number of stylistic features indicative of Eliot's increasing concentration on ideas rather than states of feeling. One such feature is its imagery which, though made up, for the most part, of the highly evocative symbols typical of the earlier works, occasionally includes figures of a more restricted illustrative nature, figures which, though lacking the precise one-to-one correspondence of allegory, are related to allegory in that they seem designed to illustrate ideas rather than to embody feelings or states of mind. An example of this more intensive allegorical kind of symbolism is the dismemberment scene at the opening of section two, a scene in which the sheer specificity of the imagery -- three leopards devour four carefully delineated parts of the speaker's body (his legs, his heart, his liver and his brains) and reject precisely three others (his guts, the strings of his eyes, and his indigestible portions) -- would seem to suggest that in addition to its emotive

value, the imagery is being used to illustrate a specific system of ideas outside the poem, though exactly what ideas has become a matter of some critical controversy.[10] Similarly, the extraordinary clarity and specificity of the imagery in the third section -- an account of the speaker's agonizing struggle up the winding staircase of a dark medieval tower and of the visions encountered at each level -- has aroused speculation that the passage may have some special allegorical significance.[11] For our purposes, however, a determination of exactly what Eliot was referring to in these passages is less important than simply the recognition that what is being employed here is a fundamentally different kind of imagery from that used either in most of the earlier works or even in other parts of this poem: a kind of imagery which, while certainly not devoid of emotive value, seems to have as its main purpose the illustration of ideas rather than the embodiment of states of feeling.

Besides being reflected in the kind of imagery that is used, the comparatively greater emphasis on ideas in Ash Wednesday also shows up in the way that abstract analytic language is occasionally used to supplement the more concrete figurative passages. In the first section, for example, Eliot largely dispenses with emotive imagery and allows the speaker to describe his state of mind directly: "I do not hope to turn again," "I do not hope to know again/The infirm glory of the positive hour," "I rejoice that things are as they are." An even greater reliance on the abstract language of argument is apparent at the beginning of

the fifth section where (in a passage already quoted) the speaker attempts to describe how the chaotic condition of the modern world has rendered the Word practically inoperative. But apart from these few exceptions, the language of the poem is for the most part still unquestionably of the highly concrete emotive variety typical of the earlier works.

While the overall tendency of the transitional poems, then, is away from an exclusive preoccupation with the expression of feelings towards a greater concentration on ideas, it is only fair to point out that the last works of this period, the "Landscapes" of 1934-35, are as thoroughly aesthetic in orientation as anything Eliot ever wrote. Far from being mere descriptions of the external world as their titles would seem to suggest, for example, these poems, like the earlier works, are in fact all devoted to exploring particular and rather unique states of mind. Like the earlier works, too, they concentrate not merely on describing these states of mind but on giving them concrete objective embodiment, something that is accomplished through the selection of a few significant details from the actual physical setting named in the title. In the case of "New Hamshire," for example, the orchard setting with its Edenic associations of fertility and innocence, is used to evoke nostalgia for a state of youthful joy and innocence that has passed away for ever; in "Virginia" the slowly moving river and the oppressive summer heat are symbolic of an inner state of spiritual apathy and a paralysis of the will; and in "Usk," the isolated chapel and the grey late-afternoon light give concrete embodiment to a mental

attitude of prayer and humility. The same practice of using an exterior setting to project an inner state of feeling is apparent in the other two poems as well; in "Rannoch, by Glencoe," where the desolate and sinister mountain pass with its prison-like atmosphere suggests the vindictiveness and self-entrapment of unregenerate man, and in "Cape-Anne" where the charming catalogue of east-coast birds serves as a symbol for the delight that the regenerate mind is able to take in the beauties of the natural world because it knows that they are only a foretaste of the greater joys of paradise.

In addition to embodying states of mind in concrete external stimuli, the "Landscapes" resemble Eliot's early poetry in the attention that is given (though always as a means of reinforcing the sense) to the element of incantation. This kind of correspondence between sound and sense is particularly well illustrated by "New Hamshire" which, with its simple nursery-rhyme like rhythms and its frequent use of synecdoche ("golden head," "crimson head," "black wing") and internal rhyme ("Cling, swing,/Spring, sing") captures the simple primitive attitude of children at play. A similar adjustment of sound to sense is apparent in "Virginia" where the short heavily accented mono-syllabic lines and the frequent use of assonance ("Slow flow," "No will is still as a river") create a sense of constriction and inactivity corresponding exactly to the oppressiveness and sluggishness of the scene being depicted. A final example of Eliot's virtuosity in creating musical effects that will reinforce the meaning is "Cape Anne." Here, for instance, the opening line with its repeated words and insistent rhythm ("O quick

quick quick quick hear the song-sparrow") is skilfully constructed to suggest the actual sound of a bird call, while the remaining lines with their light tripping rhythm and frequent alliteration ("Follow the feet," "Follow the flight") seem intended to suggest the erratic fluttering movement characteristic of a bird in flight.

The Late Poetry

Far from constituting a complete departure from the aesthetic tradition, the poetry of what I have called Eliot's final period (comprised of the Four Quartets) continues to exhibit many of the features typical of his modified aesthetic stance. Where it differs from that approach is in concentrating, even more than had been the case with the transitional works, on the embodiment of ideas rather than of states of mind. As would be expected, this shift to a more idea-oriented approach manifests itself in the same kind of stylistic features that were observed in the transitional works, the only difference being that now, instead of constituting the exception, these features have become almost the norm. Generally speaking, the features that indicate Eliot's growing preoccupation with ideas in his last works include such things as a preference for structures based upon a logic of argument rather than of association, a reliance on a more intensive illustrative kind of imagery to supplement the otherwise undiminished stock of private symbols, and a tendency to surround the more figurative passages with writing of a decidedly abstract analytic nature.

As for the matter of form, to begin with, though the Quartets do not -- any more than had the earlier poems -- aim to tell a story or even to develop a single and coherent line of philosophic argument, they nevertheless differ from anything Eliot had written earlier in their significantly greater adherance to what might be called a logic of intellection rather than of association. As a general rule, this more intellectual approach to the matter of form manifests itself not so much in the relationship between the various sections of the poem as in the pattern of organization that obtains within each individual section.

To consider the matter of the relationship between the sections first: it has already been pointed out how the different sections of the major early works consist of relatively autonomous units connected neither by logic (that is, the order in which they appear has little to do with their meaning) nor by the interpolation of any explanatory material, but simply by virtue of their association as objective correlatives for various states of feeling radiating from the mind of one central consciousness. Much the same kind of organization is apparent in the Quartets where, again, the movements are joined neither by logic nor by any explicit connective matter; the essential difference is that instead of constituting objective correlatives for a central state of mind, the various movements represent different treatments -- some comparatively abstract and philosophical, others imaginative and highly concrete -- of a central idea or philosophic problem. In the case of "Burnt Norton," for example, the central problem upon which each of the

movements constitutes a variation is that of the relationship of time to eternity and particularly of the way that the timeless can manifest itself in time. Thus in the first movement the problem is dealt with imaginatively through the presentation of a specific and highly concrete example of a timeless moment; in the second movement both lyrically (through an exploration of the meaningful but limited pattern of creation, destruction and re-creation in the temporal world) and philosophically (through a discussion of the meaning of the "still point"); in the third movement, abstractly, first through a consideration of the pointlessness and monotony of purely time-bound existence and then through a reflection on a possible way of release from that bondage; in the fourth movement, lyrically, through a reaffirmation of the eternal existence of the Divine ("the still point") despite the inevitable dissolution of the natural world; and in the fifth movement, concretely, through a comparison of the realization of form in art to the manifestation of the timeless in time. Though this is only the barest outline of what is really a very rich and complex poem, it is sufficient to demonstrate that what governs the relationship between movements in "Burnt Norton" -- and essentially the same pattern can be discovered in the three remaining quartets as well -- is a musical form of organization in which each movement, rather than serving to advance an argument, constitutes a variation on the same central theme.

However, rather than in the relationship between movements, Eliot's more idea-orientated approach in the Quartets is most

clearly apparent in the internal organization of the movements themselves which, as a rule, adhere to a logic of argument rather than of association. That this is indeed the case is evident from the frequency with which stylistic devices normally associated with writings of an expository nature are used in the Quartets. For example, Eliot asks rhetorical questions, uses enumeration to clarify the points of an argument, states a proposition and supports it with examples, argues by analogy, and clarifies an idea by restating it in different ways. Nowhere is this argumentative approach more apparent than in the third movement of "East Coker" where, for example, after suggesting the idea that the Divine can be reached through the chosen darkness of religious contemplation, Eliot goes on to develop the idea by describing three analogous situations in which darkness is the prerequisite to a desired change: waiting in darkness for a scene to be changed in a theatre, waiting for a train to start moving in a subway, and waiting for surgery under ether. Then after asking the rhetorical question of whether he should repeat what he has said before, he proceeds to offer a series of paradoxes which recapitulate the central theme of the movement, namely, that a recovery of spiritual reality, of the "laughter in the garden," is contingent upon a renunciation of all earthly hopes and satisfactions:

> To arrive where you are, to get from where you are not
> You must go by a way wherein there is no ecstasy.
> In order to arrive at what you do not know
> You must go by a way which is the way of ignorance.
> In order to possess what you do not possess
> You must go by the way of dispossession.

A similar progression of thought rather than feeling is apparent in the third movement of "Little Gidding" where, after carefully enumerating three possible responses to reality (attachment, detachment, and indifference to "self and to things and to persons"), Eliot moves on to make the point that of these three, the only two that are valid -- attachment and detachment -- ultimately lead to the same conclusion: that behind the apparent contradictions of the temporal world there is "another pattern," a Divine plan, according to which

> Sin is Behovely, but
> All shall be well, and
> All manner of thing shall be well.

As would be the case in a piece of expository writing, this idea is then supported by the use of a number of examples, specifically, those of historical figures who, though failures by earthly standards, nevertheless acquire eternal significance as "symbols" of the determination to keep spiritual values alive. It needs to be emphasized, finally, that the kind of analysis that has been given of the thought progression in these two passages -- and the same thing could be done with nearly any other movement in the poem -- is by no means to be regarded as a substitute for the poetry itself; the point is simply that the very fact that these kinds of analyses can be made at all suggests that the Quartets are constructed according to a fundamentally different principle of organization than the earlier works, one that has its basis in intellection rather than in feeling.

In addition to being reflected in the structure of the work, Eliot's comparatively greater emphasis on ideas in the Quartets is apparent in the imagery, the fact that instead of functioning, as was largely the case in the earlier poems, to convey states of mind, it is used here primarily to embody ideas. The result is that, though far from exhibiting the exact one-to-one correspondence of allegory, and though by no means without a considerable emotional impact of its own, it lacks the expansiveness, the atmosphere of almost unlimited meaningfulness, so characteristic of the earlier poems. While a thorough analysis of the imagery in the Quartets is beyond the scope of our inquiry, an investigation of a few of the more important patterns will demonstrate in what ways this imagery is both related to and different from the kind used earlier.

Undoubtedly, the most memorable images in the poem are the ones used to symbolize the entrance of the supernatural into the temporal order. Chief amongst these is the image of the rose garden, an image which, in spite of being endowed with a specific meaning, is so complex and evocative that its impact is really closer to that of the earlier imagery. What accounts for its evocativeness is the fact that it is not an isolated image but really only the focal point for a whole system of related images which together function to convey the complex emotion, the overwhelming sense of wonder and ecstasy associated with the experience of breaking out of the enclosing boundaries of human time into the realm of eternity. For example, the peculiar beauty and transforming quality of that experience is suggested by the striking

image of sunlight on dust and stone, a motif first introduced in the initial depiction of the rose garden in "Burnt Norton" I -- "Dry the pool, dry concrete, brown edged,/And the pool was filled with water out of sunlight" -- and used several times thereafter as a kind of shorthand to refer to this moment: "Sudden in a shaft of sunlight/Even while the dust moves" ("Burnt Norton" V), "The distraction fit, lost in a shaft of sunlight" ("The Dry Salvages" V). Also associated with the rose garden and used to convey not only the Edenic freshness and innocence but the excitement and joy of that experience is the image of children laughing in the foliage. Like the earlier one, this image recurs throughout the Quartets, each time serving to recall some of the intense emotion associated with the original experience. In addition there are several other images which, though related less directly to the central garden symbol, are used to convey the unique and spontaneous nature of a moment of mystical illumination, images such as "running streams," "the wild thyme unseen," "winter lightning," and "wild strawberries."

Another symbol for the Divine intersection of the timeless with time -- and one that in its comparatively limited meaningfulness is really more typical of Eliot's later poetry -- is the depiction of a "midwinter spring" at the beginning of "Little Gidding." Here the apparently sterile and desolate winter landscape, suddenly transformed by the piercing rays of the sun into a brilliant vision of light and springtime, becomes a graphic symbol for the transformation and rejuvenation of the deadened soul

by the Holy Spirit. But though it is realized with a great deal of visual clarity and is by no means without considerable emotive effect, this symbol lacks the sheer expansiveness of the earlier ones, only becoming fully comprehensible -- the meaning of a term like "pentecostal fire" only taking on its full significance -- when interpreted in the light of an external and specifically Christian framework of ideas.

Operating in a kind of dramatic tension with these symbols of transcendence is another group of images in the poem used to express the emptiness and futility of time-bound existence uninformed by any awareness of spiritual reality. One of the most prominent of these is the image of darkness which is rendered particularly effective by its contrast to the "heart of light" and the "shaft of sunlight" associated with the rose garden. Images of darkness are particularly prominent in the dim underground world of "Burnt Norton" III, the depiction of the "black cloud" which "carries the sun away" in the lyric fourth movement of the same poem, the description in "East Coker" III of the black void of death awaiting the inhabitants of a materialistic civilization, and the recognition in "East Coker" V that the journey "into another [i.e. a spiritual] intensity" will necessarily be "Through the dark cold and the empty desolation" of temporal existence.

Also used to convey the monotony and circularity of time-bound existence, is a whole group of what might be called images of "linearity," images, that is, which represent the human journey through time as a straight-line track or road down which man hurries

towards an inescapable death. This kind of imagery is dominant, for example, in "Burnt Norton" III where the picture of a London tube train on its endless journey from one station to the next becomes a powerful symbol for the aimless time-bound soul forever rushing into a future that promises to be as meaningless as the past. A similar use of a linear motif to convey the oppressiveness of human existence bound by the temporal is the description at the beginning of "East Coker" I of a "deep lane [that] insists on the direction/Into the village" (emphasis added). In the same way, too, the images of railroad tracks and a ship's wake receding into the distance in "Dry Salvages" III serve as symbols for man's entrapment in time. Finally, though it is developed in much greater detail, the image of the river (particularly prominent in "The Dry Salvages") fits into this general pattern of linear imagery in that it, too, functions as a symbol for the inexorable flow of human time from birth through youth and age to death:

> His rhythm was present in the nursery bedroom,
> In the rank ailanthus of the April dooryard,
> In the smell of grapes on the autumn table,
> And the evening circle in the winter gaslight.

While the images that we have examined so far differ from those of the earlier poetry only in that they have a definite "meaning" and are therefore generally less suggestive, there are a few instances in the Quartets of images which are so restricted in meaning that they exhibit the sort of rigidity typical of allegory. A case in point is "Burnt Norton" V where, in making the transition from a discussion of the instability of words in a poem to the

elusiveness of spiritual reality, Eliot suddenly introduces the image of "The Word in the desert/ . . . attacked by voices of temptation." By drawing upon such a specifically Christian symbol to suggest the presence of the Divine -- something which, up to this point, had been indicated only metaphorically through the imagery of the rose garden -- Eliot is clearly stepping outside the self-contained imaginative world of the poem into a realm of conventional religious symbolism. An even clearer example of this more restricted kind of imagery is the lyric fourth movement of "East Coker" which only makes sense when read as a kind of allegory in which the reader is expected to make such associations as that of Christ with the "wounded surgeon," original sin with "our sickness," the church with "the dying nurse," the world with "the hospital," Adam with "the ruined millionaire," and the elements of the Eucharist with "the dripping blood and bloody flesh." Other more isolated instances in the Quartets of Eliot's reliance on images with a definite and conventional religious meaning are his reference in "The Dry Salvages" II to the "Prayer of the one Annunciation" as a way of signifying the Incarnation, his allusion, later in the same movement, to "The bitter apple and the bite in the apple" (a reference to original sin), and his prayer in "The Dry Salvages" IV to the "Lady, Queen of Heaven" (a name for the Virgin Mary).

In addition to affecting the structure and the imagery of the poem, Eliot's comparatively greater emphasis on ideas in the Quartets is reflected in the kind of language that is used: here,

much more than in the case of the earlier or even of the transitional poems, concrete lyrical passages are interspersed with rhetoric of a decidedly abstract analytic quality. This tendency to mingle the lyric and the discursive is evident, for example, in the first movement of "Burnt Norton" where the highly figurative and concrete passage containing the rose garden episode is surrounded by passages of abstract philosophic argument which serve as commentary on that experience. Just how much Eliot's style had changed since the early period can be seen by comparing this passage with the treatment of the hyacinth garden episode in The Waste Land. Though the experience recorded in the two passages is essentially the same one -- each involves a moment of heightened consciousness, a glimpse into the "heart of light" -- the first is presented concretely, with no explicit commentary whatsoever, while the second is surrounded by line after line of abstract discourse in which there is an attempt to explain the experience in philosophic terms. Similarly, the second part of the second movement, the entire third movement, and most of the fifth movement of "Burnt Norton" are couched in language which, at least in comparison to that of the earlier poetry, is abstract in style, philosophic in content and conversational in tone.

This tendency to mingle poetic passages with passages of a more abstract or analytic nature is evident in the other quartets as well. The second part of the second movement, all of the third movement, and most of the fifth movement of "East Coker," for example, are couched in the same abstract style and give the

impression of the poet reasoning with his audience: "That was a way of putting it -- not very satisfactory," "You say I am repeating/Something I have said before. I shall say it again," "So here I am, in the middle way, having had twenty years . . ./ Trying to learn to use words." A substantial portion of "The Dry Salvages," too, is made up of discursive passages, passages such as the discussion of the meaning of the past in Part II ("I have said before/That the past experience revived in the memory/Is not the experience of one life only"), the disquisition on time in the third movement ("I sometimes wonder if that is what Krishna meant . . ./That the future is a faded song"), and the discussion of the significance of moments "in and out of time" in the last movement ("to apprehend/The point of intersection of the timeless/With time, is an occupation for the saint"). This same mingling of the lyric and the discursive, the concrete and the abstract is evident, finally, in "Little Gidding" where some of the most imaginative writing in the entire Quartets (passages like the opening depiction of a "midwinter spring" or the lyric fourth movement) is surrounded by passages that are completely conversational, even prosaic, in style: "If you came this way,/ Taking the route you would be likely to take/From the place you would be likely to come from"; "There are three conditions which often look alike/Yet differ completely"; "What we call the beginning is often the end."

It is important to notice, finally -- and this is only to be expected given the greater reliance on abstract language -- that the

element of incantation, so prominent in the earlier poems, plays a less important role in the Quartets. This, of course, is not to argue that incantation disappears from the poem altogether -- on the contrary, many passages are as decidedly lyrical as anything Eliot ever wrote -- only to suggest that, in contrast to the almost sustained lyricism of many of the earlier poems, the music of the Quartets is more concentrated, extremely pronounced in some sections, virtually absent from others. Besides its importance in the lyric fourth movement of each quartet, for example, music plays an important role in such other passages as the celebration in "Burnt Norton" II of the dance of life uniting all nature into a harmonious whole, the account of cosmic confusion and cataclysm in "East Coker" II, the lament for the transience and seeming purposelessness of human existence in the sestina of "The Dry Salvages" II, and the depiction of the decay, disintegration, and death inherent in all natural things in "Little Gidding" II.

Regarded as a whole, then, Eliot's poetry may be said to represent not so much a rejection as a modification of aesthetic practice, not so much an abandonment of the quintessentially aesthetic concentration on internal states of feeling as a recognition that, to be valid, poetry must take into account not just the subjective but the objective component of experience as well. In practice, this modified aesthetic stance, this determination to include both the subjective and objective aspects of experience, is reflected mainly in Eliot's imagery which, being altogether more concrete and substantial than anything found in

aesthetic poetry, is capable of communicating precise states of mind rather than generalized emotions or stock poetic effects. In most other respects, however, his poetry is still very much within the aesthetic tradition, exhibiting such characteristically aesthetic features, for instance, as an avoidance of narrational intrusions or explanations of any kind, a preference for organic forms based upon a logic of association rather than of argument, and a concentration on the element of incantation. Only in the later poetry -- and then only to the extent that the focus shifts from an exclusive preoccupation with feeling to a concentration on ideas and feeling -- can there be said to be a significant departure from the aesthetic tradition, a departure that is reflected in such stylistic changes as a concentration on rational as opposed to purely associative forms of organization, a preference for images having a definite meaning in addition to their emotive value, and an increasing use of abstract rhetoric to supplement passages of a more imaginative and lyric nature.

NOTES

Preface

[1]T.S. Eliot, For Lancelot Andrewes (London: Faber & Gwyer, 1928), p. ix.

[2]For a fuller discussion of the neoclassic features of Eliot's poetry and criticism, see W.J. Bate's introduction to Eliot in Criticism: The Major Texts (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1970), pp. 519-524; and the chapter entitled "The New Classicism" in D.E.S. Maxwell's The Poetry of T.S. Eliot (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1952), pp. 36-47.

[3]This idea is stated most fully in Eliot's early essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent," The Sacred Wood (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1920), pp. 47-59. It also forms the central thesis of his later lecture, The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism (London: Faber & Faber, 1933).

[4]Edmund Wilson, "T.S. Eliot," Axel's Castle (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1932), pp. 93-131. The quotation appears on p. 119.

[5]F.O. Matthiessen, The Achievement of T.S. Eliot (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), pp. 15-18.

[6]Elizabeth Drew, T.S. Eliot: The Design of His Poetry (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1949), pp. 22-24; Maxwell, pp. 48-68; Hugh Kenner, The Invisible Poet (New York: McDowell, Obolensky, 1959), pp. 13-39; Elisabeth Schneider, T.S. Eliot: The Pattern in the Carpet (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), pp. 10-21.

[7]C.K. Stead, The New Poetic (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1964). See especially Chapters 5, 6 and 7. Stephen Spender, Eliot (New York: Fontana, 1975). See Chapters 5, 8 and 9 in particular.

Chapter 1

[1]Albert L. Guérard, Art for Art's Sake (New York: Shocken Books, 1936), p. xiv.

[2]This, for example, is the underlying thesis of the studies by Guérard and by William Gaunt, The Aesthetic Adventure (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1945).

[3]Sir Henry Taylor, "Preface" to Philip Van Artevelde in Victorian Poetry and Poetics, ed. Walter Houghton and G.R. Stange, 2nd ed. (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1968), p. 862.

[4]John Morley, "Mr. Swinburne's New Poems: Poems and Ballads," in Victorian Poetry and Poetics, p. 884.

[5]One of the most penetrating studies into the relationship of the theory of art for art's sake to German transcendental philosophy is Rose Frances Egan, "The Genesis of the Theory of 'Art for Art's Sake' in Germany and in England," Smith College Studies in Modern Languages, II, no. 4, July 1921, and V, no. 3, April 1924. I am greatly indebted to Egan (pp. 30-61) for the following summary.

[6]Although her purpose is to relate the breakdown of Empiricism to the genesis of Bradley's philosophy of becoming, Anne Bolgan, "A Resume of Bradley's 'Great Argument,'" What the Thunder Really Said (Montreal: Queen's University Press, 1973), pp. 105-151, presents an excellent historical survey of philosophic trends during the eighteenth century to which I am indebted for the following summary.

[7]Théophile Gautier, "Preface" to Mademoiselle de Maupin, trans. Jacques Garzun (New York: The Heritage Press, 1944), p. xxvii.

[8]Edgar Allan Poe, "The Poetic Principle," Works, ed. E.G. Stedman and G.E. Woodberry (New York: The Colonial Company, 1895), VI, pp. 9-10.

[9]Algernon Charles Swinburne, William Blake: A Critical Essay (London: Chatto & Windus, 1906), p. 100.

[10]Algernon Charles Swinburne, "Victor Hugo: L'Année terrible," in Victorian Poetry and Poetics, p. 687.

[11]Walter Pater, "Leonardo da Vinci" in The Renaissance (London: Macmillan, 1910), p. 117.

[12]Pater, "Sandro Botticelli" in The Renaissance, p. 55.

[13]Walter Pater, Plato and Platonism (London: Macmillan, 1910), p. 269.

[14]Oscar Wilde, "The Critic as Artist" in Intentions and The Soul of Man (London: Methuen and Co., 1908; rpt. 1969), p. 183.

[15]Wilde, p. 198.

[16]Wilde, p. 120.

[17]Wilde, p. 121.

[18]Poe, p. 13.

[19]Poe, p. 17.

[20]Pater, "Preface" to The Renaissance, p. ix.

[21]Pater, "Sandro Botticelli," The Renaissance, pp. 50-51.

[22]Wilde, p. 166.

[23]Wilde, p. 183.

[24]Walter Pater, "Wordsworth," Appreciations (London: Macmillan, 1910), p. 62.

[25]Wilde, p. 166.

[26]Oscar Wilde, "The Decay of Lying," Intentions and the Soul of Man, pp. 3-4.

[27]Wilde, "The Critic as Artist," pp. 173-174.

[28]Edgar Allan Poe, "The Philosophy of Composition," Works, VI, pp. 31-46.

[29]Poe, "The Poetic Principle," p. 3.

[30]Poe, "The Poetic Principle," p. 12.

[31]Paul Verlaine, "Art Poétique," in An Anthology of French Poetry from Nerval to Valéry in English Translation, ed. Angel Flores (New York: Doubleday, 1958), p. 348.

[32]Charles Algernon Swinburne, "Under the Microscope" in Swinburne Replies, p. 65.

[33]Pater, "The School of Giorgione," The Renaissance, p. 135 and p. 137.

[34]Pater, "Style," Appreciations, pp. 37-38.

[35]Wilde, "The Decay of Lying," p. 19.

[36]Wilde, "The Critic as Artist," p. 207.

[37]Charles Baudelaire, "Paysage," in An Anthology of French Poetry, pp. 304-305.

[38]Baudelaire, "L'Invitation au Voyage," in An Anthology of French Poetry, pp. 301-302.

[39]Baudelaire, "Correspondances," in An Anthology of French Poetry, pp. 297-298.

[40]Stéphane Mallarmé, "L'Azur," in An Anthology of French Poetry, pp. 367-368.

[41]Mallarmé, "Les Fenêtres," in An Anthology of French Poetry, pp. 365-366.

[42]Paul Verlaine, "Dans les Bois," in An Anthology of French Poetry, p. 340.

[43]Jules Laforgue, "Couchant d'hiver," in An Anthology of French Poetry, pp. 385-386.

[44]Tristan Corbière, "Paysage Mauvais," in An Anthology of French Poetry, p. 331.

[45]Walter E. Houghton in Victorian Poetry and Poetics, p. 613.

[46]Algernon Charles Swinburne, "Hendecasyllabics," in The Symbolist Poem, ed. Edward Engelberg (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1967), pp. 89-90.

[47]Swinburne, "Evening by the Sea," in The Symbolist Poem, pp. 99-100.

[48]Algernon Charles Swinburne, "The Triumph of Time," in The Pre-Raphaelites and Their Circle, ed. Cecil B. Lang, 2nd ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1975), pp. 344-354.

[49]T.S. Eliot, "Swinburne as Poet," The Sacred Wood, 2nd ed. (1928 rpt. New York: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1960), p. 147.

[50]Pater, "Sandro Botticelli," The Renaissance, p. 54.

[51]Pater, "Leonardo da Vinci," p. 117.

[52]Pater, "Style," p. 10.

[53]Wilde, "The Critic as Artist," p. 164.

[54]Wilde, "The Critic as Artist," p. 189.

[55]Pater, "Leonardo da Vinci," p. 113.

[56]Pater, "Coleridge," Appreciations, pp. 80-81.

[57]Wilde, "The Critic as Artist," pp. 126-127.

[58]Eliot, The Sacred Wood, pp. 5-6.

[59]Algernon Charles Swinburne, "Beaumont and Fletcher," in Studies in Prose and Poetry (London: Chatto & Windus, 1907), pp. 69-70.

[60]Swinburne, "Beaumont and Fletcher," p. 58.

[61]Pater, "Preface" to The Renaissance, p. viii.

[62]Pater, "Preface," pp. ix-x.

[63]Pater, "Preface," p. xi.

[64]Pater, "Preface," p. xi.

[65]Pater, "Coleridge," p. 68.

[66]Pater, Plato and Platonism, p. 143.

[67]Wilde, "The Critic as Artist," p. 160.

[68]Wilde, "The Critic as Artist," p. 148.

[69]Wilde, "The Critic as Artist," p. 125.

[70]Wilde, "The Critic as Artist," pp. 164-165.

Chapter 2

[1]T.S. Eliot, Selected Essays, 3rd ed. (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1951), p. 442. All subsequent references to this edition will be indicated parenthetically in the text by the abbreviation S.E.

[2]T.S. Eliot, The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism, 2nd ed. (London: Faber and Faber: 1964), p. 152. All subsequent references will be abbreviated U.P.U.C. and will appear parenthetically in the text.

[3]T.S. Eliot, On Poetry and Poets (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1961), p. 211. All subsequent references will be abbreviated O.P.P. and will appear parenthetically in the text.

[4]T.S. Eliot, The Sacred Wood, 2nd ed. (1928; rpt. New York: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1960), pp. vii-viii. All subsequent references will be abbreviated S.W. and will appear parenthetically in the text.

[5]T.S. Eliot, "The Idea of a Literary Review," The Criterion, IV, 1 (Jan. 1926), p. 4.

[6]T.S. Eliot, "Introduction," Paul Valery, The Art of Poetry (New York: Vintage, 1958), p. xvii.

[7]T.S. Eliot, "[A Review of] The Growth of Civilisation, and The Origin of Magic and Religion. By W.J. Perry," The Criterion, II, 8 (July 1924), p. 491.

[8]T.S. Eliot, "Poetry and Propaganda" in Literary Opinion in America, ed. Morton Z. Zabel (3rd ed. rev., 2 vols.: New York: Harper, 1937), 2: 106.

[9]Eliot, "Introduction" to The Art of Poetry, p. xxviii.

[10]T.S. Eliot, "A Commentary," The Criterion, XI, 45 (July, 1932), p. 678.

[11]T.S. Eliot, Collected Poems (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), p. 213.

[12]T.S. Eliot, Knowledge and Experience (London: Faber and Faber, 1964), p. 31.

[13]T.S. Eliot, "Reflections on Contemporary Poetry, IV," The Egoist, VI, 3 (July, 1919), p. 40.

[14]T.S. Eliot, To Criticize the Critic (London: Faber and Faber, 1965), p. 40. All subsequent references to this text will be abbreviated T.C.C. and will be indicated parenthetically.

[15]T.S. Eliot, "London Letter," Dial, LXXI, 2 (August, 1921), p. 216.

[16]T.S. Eliot, "Reflections on Contemporary Poetry, II," Egoist, IV, 9 (October, 1917), p. 133.

[17]T.S. Eliot, "Reflections on Contemporary Poetry, I," Egoist, IV, 8 (September, 1917), p. 118.

[18]T.S. Eliot, "In Memory of Henry James," Egoist, V, 1 (January, 1918), p. 2.

[19]Ibid., p. 2.

[20]T.S. Eliot, "A Note on Richard Crashaw" in For Lancelot Andrewes (London: Faber & Gwyer, 1928), p. 124.

[21]Eliot, "Poetry and Propaganda," 2: 106.

[22]T.S. Eliot, "A Commentary," The Criterion, III, 9 (October, 1924), p. 2.

[23]I am indebted for this idea to Mowbray Allan, T.S. Eliot's Impersonal Theory of Poetry (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1974), pp. 86-87.

[24]T.S. Eliot, "Introduction" to Ezra Pound: Selected Poems (London: Faber and Faber, 1928), p. 9.

[25]Ibid., p. 19.

[26]T.S. Eliot, "Donne in our Time" in A Garland for John Donne (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1931), pp. 15-16.

[27]T.S. Eliot, "London Letter," p. 214.

[28]For a complete examination of the part played by the unconscious in Eliot's theory of poetry, see C.K. Stead, "Eliot's 'Dark Embryo'" in The New Poetic (London: Hutchinson University Library, 1964), pp. 125-147.

[29]Eliot, "Introduction" to Art of Poetry, p. xii.

[30]T.S. Eliot, "A Note on Poetry and Belief," The Enemy, 1 (January, 1927), p. 16.

[31]Eliot, "Poetry and Propaganda," 2: 106.

[32]T.S. Eliot, "The Education of Taste," Athenaeum, 4652 (June 27, 1919), p. 521.

[33]T.S. Eliot, "Studies in Contemporary Criticism, I," Egoist, V, 9 (October, 1918), p. 113.

[34]T.S. Eliot, "Studies in Contemporary Criticism, II," Egoist, V, 10 (November, 1918), p. 131.

[35]Eliot, "Poetry and Propaganda," 2: 103.

Chapter 3

[1]T.S. Eliot, "Introduction" to Ezra Pound: Selected Poems (London: Faber and Faber, 1928), p. 17.

[2]See, for example, his observations in "Introduction" to Ezra Pound: Selected Poems, p. 8.

[3]Edmund Wilson, Axel's Castle (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1932), p. 96.

[4]Helen Gardner, The Art of T.S. Eliot (London: Faber and Faber, 1949), p. 95.

[5]I am indebted for this last observation to A.D. Moody, Thomas Stearns Eliot, Poet (London: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 99.

[6]For a detailed history of the poem's publication see Moody, p. 120.

[7]This suggestion comes from an excellent reading of the poem by Friedrich W. Strothmann and Lawrence V. Ryan, entitled "Hope for T.S. Eliot's 'Empty Men,'" PMLA, LXXIII (1958), pp. 426-432.

[8]Not only, for example, do Eliot's various kingdoms bear a certain resemblance to the realms of Hell, Purgatory and Paradise in the Comedy, but the "multifoliate rose," Dante's symbol for the complex unity of paradise, is taken over and used in the poem where it retains virtually the same meaning it had in the original.

[9]For details of the poem's publication see Grover Smith, T.S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays, 2nd. ed. (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1974), p. 135.

[10]Grover Smith, for example, speculates that the three leopards "may well signify the world, the flesh, and the devil" of Christian theology, while the heart, the liver, and the brain "correspond to the vital spirit, the natural spirit, and the animal spirit in . . . Galenic physiological theory" (Smith, p. 144). Philip Headings pushes the allegorical reading even further, suggesting that "'my heart my liver and that which had been contained/In the hollow round of my skull' -- correspond to the seats of the three spirits [i.e. the natural spirit, the spirit of life, and the animate spirit] that make up Dante's identity in his moving description of the effects of his first meeting with Beatrice at the age of nine" (Philip R. Headings, T.S. Eliot [New York: Twayne Publishers, 1964], p. 77).

[11]Grover Smith, for example, remarks on the general resemblance between this scene and the purgatorical ascent in the Commedia and St. John's mystical ladder in The Dark Night of the Soul (p. 147); while Headings, with somewhat more confidence, asserts that the three stairs correspond to various triads in the Commedia such as "the three steps of penitence -- confession, contrition, and satisfaction -- and the three classes of improperly ordered love on which the structure of purgatory is based -- distorted, defective, and excessive loves" (p. 64).

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